PLEASE NOTE: During the recent webinars, the following errors were discovered in the webinar presentation (posed on the Department's web site on its "Funding Opportunities" page). There are no corresponding errors in the RFP or in the grant opportunity on the Grants Gateway. Accordingly, please make note of these errors when compiling your proposal(s) and kindly disregard the errors noted below. We apologize for any confusion and inconvenience to you.

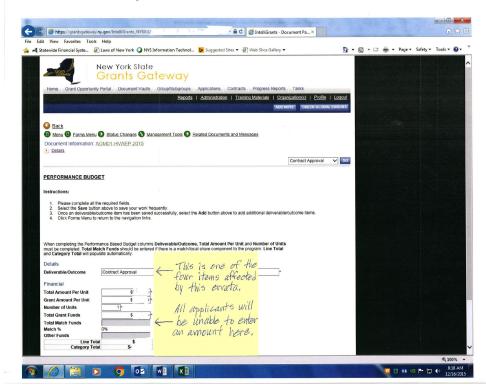
Errata:

- (1) **Webinar presentation page 8** = Incorrectly states "within 18 months after receiving preliminary approval." As correctly stated on page 10 of the RFP, this statement should read as follows: "within 18 months of state approval of the funding agreement" (i.e., the contract between New York State and your entity reflecting the amount awarded under this HVAEP RFP).
- (2) Sample Proposal Excerpt #2, page 22 = Incorrectly suggests that "A Foodshed Conservation Plan for the Region," published by Scenic Hudson, is an acceptable example of a document that covers the "Hudson Valley region" as defined in the HVAEP RFP. Since that document does not cover all 14 counties identified as the "Hudson Valley region" on page 6 of the RFP, that document should not be submitted in response to subpart 4 of Program Specific Question #14(d). Rather, that document is an acceptable example of one that covers a sub-area of this region. Accordingly, it is another example of what may be submitted in response to subpart 3 of Program Specific Question #14(d).

PLEASE NOTE: As the first applicants began preparing the Performance Based Budget, the following errors were discovered. We apologize for any confusion and inconvenience to you.

Errata:

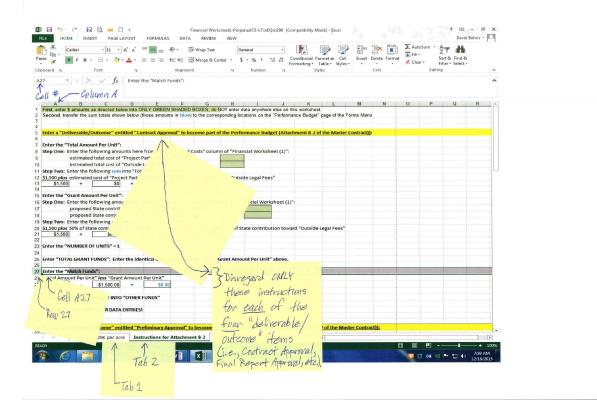
(1) "Total Match Funds" (refer to Appendix A-1 for larger version of image immediately below) of the "Performance Budget" of the "Forms Menu" in the Grants Gateway =



Due to an error when creating the HVAEP grant opportunity in the Grants Gateway system, it is not possible for applicants to enter an amount into the "Total Match Funds" field for any "Deliverable/Outcome" (i.e., Contract Approval, Preliminary Approval, Project File Approval, and Final Report Approval) listed for the Performance Based Budget on the Forms Menu.

Accordingly, no proposal will be deemed to be incomplete for not having an amount entered into "Match Funds" for each of those four items of the Performance Based Budget. However, please be sure to complete ALL requested items elsewhere in the Performance Based Budget as well as in the Financial Worksheet in each proposal that you submit. All of that information will be critical when developing a contract for each awarded proposal. The problem described above will be addressed at the time that an awarded project will be developed into a funding agreement (i.e., contract) between the State and the awarded entity.

Therefore, please disregard the "Enter the "Match Funds": instruction contained in cell A27 of Tab 2 of the Financial Worksheet (shown immediately below; refer to Appendix A-1 for larger version of this image).

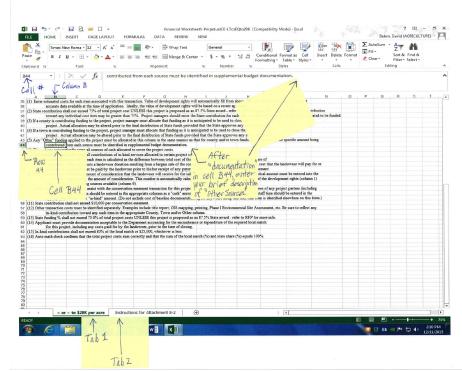


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PLEASE NOTE: After the deadline for submitting questions had passed, the following items were discovered and the following supplemental information is offered to clarify each item.

Clarifications:

(1) Item (5) of "Instructions for Filling out Attachment B-5a" (refer to Appendix B for larger version of image immediately below) regarding "supplemental budget documentation" =

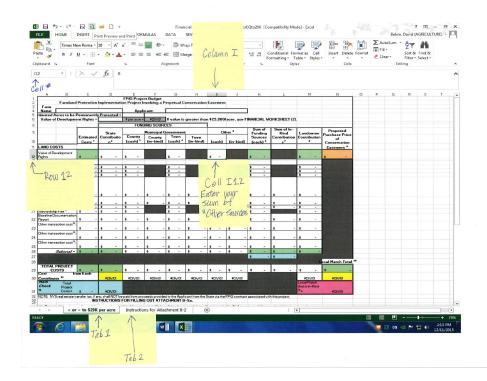


Item (5) is on the back side (or page 2) of tab 1 of the particular "Financial Worksheet" that is associated with your proposed conservation easement project. Tab 1 is labeled "< or = to \$29K per acre" on the Excel spreadsheet entitled "Financial Worksheet (1)." Alternatively, tab 1 is labeled "> \$29K per acre" on the Excel spreadsheet entitled "Financial Worksheet (2).

"Supplemental budget documentation" is additional information that supplements or otherwise explains the sources of the sum amount entered in the corresponding cell on page 1 of first tab of the respective "Financial Worksheet" that is associated with your proposed conservation easement project. For example, if your project has two "other" funding sources, you would enter a brief list of each such source and the amount of contribution associated with each source immediately following the text of Note (5).

Any such sum of "Other Sources" of cash would be entered into cell I12 (refer to Appendix C for larger version of image shown atop next page).

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(2) Request For Proposals page 7, "Ineligible Project Costs," fourth bullet = Option to Purchase at Agricultural Value (OPAV) or similar provision (e.g., "preemptive purchase rights") is an ineligible project cost. As such, that cost shall not appear on the Financial Worksheet because it is not an acceptable local match contribution and because State proceeds shall not be used to cover any portion of such cost.

The following questions were submitted to the Department of Agriculture and Markets regarding this Request For Proposals (RFP) for the Hudson Valley Agricultural Enhancement Program (HVAEP) program. Each question appears as it was submitted in the order each was received.

Each question is answered below.

- 1. Q: How would we reflect in the financial worksheet (and therefore also the Performance Budget) the fact that the landowner is willing to take a small portion (about 10%) of his payment as a multi-year installment payment?
 - **A:** The Financial Worksheet must reflect the total purchase price of the proposed conservation easement. Regardless of whether the landowner receives that amount in a lump sum or via two or more payments totaling that amount, the Financial Worksheet only reflects that total sum. Thus, you do not reflect any information

regarding installment payments on either the Financial Worksheet or the performance-based budget.

- 2. Q: (Program Specific Question #13h OPTIONAL) Do you want copies of each of our conservation easements that are applicable to this question, or just one, as an example?
 - **A:** Please submit one sample copy.
- **3. Q:** (Program Specific Questions 13i and 13k) Is the definition of "project partner" only someone who is a "Joint Applicant" as identified in Program Specific Question b? In other words, if we have another conservation organization who will be providing ongoing stewardship/monitoring assistance, and/or will be named in the easement as a back-up holder of the easement, do they need to be a Joint Applicant in order for their staff training to count toward question 13i and 13k?
 - **A:** No, "project partner" is not limited to "Joint Applicant" as "project partner" is used in those two Program Specific Questions. For those two questions, a "project partner" could be any entity that is involved with or otherwise supporting your proposed project (whether via financial contribution to your specific project or through that entity's actions generally supporting agriculture and/or local farmland protection activities in the vicinity of your proposed project). Therefore, the "conservation organization" that you describe is an acceptable "project partner" as that term is used in each of these Program Specific Questions.
- **4. Q:** (Program Specific Questions 18a and 18b) The questions ask for a financial statement showing current "<u>cash</u>" balance. Our fund is invested in cash and liquid marketable securities (mutual funds, stocks, bonds). Are you interested in knowing the value of the fund, not just the cash?
 - **A:** Yes, we are inquiring about the fund balance or value of the account associated with the "legal defense fund" of your entity and associated with the "easement stewardship fund" of your entity.
- **5. Q:** (RFP, item (2) Ineligible Project Costs) Can you define "funding agreement"? When used in this section does that mean the grant award letter from the Department and not an executed state contract?
 - **A:** As used throughout the HVAEP RFP, "funding agreement" is equivalent to the HVAEP contract that will be entered into between New York State and your entity. The award letter that your entity will receive from our Department is *not* the "funding agreement."
- **6. Q:** (RFP, item (2) Ineligible Project Costs) (a) Can you clarify what items are considered indirect or overhead costs? (b) Is the applicant limited to charging only

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wage/salary or can it include fringe benefits of that position? (c) Can the organization be reimbursed for their billing rate for applicable staff involved in the grant implementation?

- **A:** (a) Indirect or overhead costs would include office rent, office utilities, and any other cost that is indirectly incurred by the entity through the employment of its own staff or that is indirectly incurred by the entity due to consultant(s) or other contracted help that will be involved with the proposed project.
- (b) The applicant may include fringe benefits when estimating the "project partners' staff time" line item as shown on the Financial Worksheet.
- (c) Yes, provided the billing rate for each applicable staff person does not exceed the sum of (i) hourly rate for the staff person plus (ii) fringe benefits applicable to that staff person.
- **7. Q:** (Page 23 of RFP, item (1) of Supplemental Information for Bonus Points Consideration, second to last bullet.) Would an annual county agricultural fair be considered an "agri-business expo" if evidence was submitted in the application that demonstrated the fair showcased local agri-businesses?

A: Yes.

8. Q: Could we apply for state funding (for 25% funding level plus transaction costs) and federal ALE funding at the same time? Would the state consider funding a proposal at the 25% level without confirmation yet that a federal grant will be awarded to the project?

A: Yes to both questions.

However, please check the eligibility requirements for ALE. According to page 528-D.3 of Title 440 – Conservation Programs Manual (Part 528 – Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP)): "Eligible entities must certify at the time of application that they have the required funds available for each parcel (see section 528.43 for further details on entity matching funds requirements)."

Furthermore, please note that if you submit an application requesting the "25%+" cost-share option under HVAEP that your entity must be awarded Federal funding within the 4-year contract period associated with your HVAEP award; if not, the State shall rescind its award to your entity in its entirety (see page 8 of the RFP).

9. Q: If an entity had a fund for legal defense separate from their stewardship fund, could that be added as a line item under transaction costs? If so, would the state fund part of that cost separately or would it be considered part of the \$10,000 stewardship fee?

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- **A:** No. If the applicant entity has a policy wherein its "easement stewardship fund" allows for the use of such monies toward expenses it incurs in the course of it enforcing or defending its conservation easement in legal proceedings, then that entity may use any such contribution (including any provided by the State) toward such expenses. However, the applicant entity shall not identify "legal defense" or "legal defense fund contribution" as a separate line item in the financial worksheet or the performance-based budget as a line item distinct from "easement stewardship" since neither of the former terms/phrases are identified in the HVAEP RFP as an eligible cost. Thus, no such cost may appear as a separate line item on the financial worksheet or on the performance based budget associated with your project.
- **10.Q:** If the proposed easement property is under a single farm operation at the time of the application, but might be in multiple operations within a year, is it still eligible to apply for funding now? For instance, a farmer plans to retire soon and will want to rent out some of the land during the transition and easement process (should the proposal be selected for funding).
 - **A:** No, because the resulting project will involve more than one Farm Operation. If the scenario you describe is the landowner's eventual desired outcome, then that scenario (i.e., leasing to any additional Farm Operation) must be delayed until after the proposed conservation easement(s) associated with the awarded project have been closed.
- 11.Q: On page 4 of the HVAEP RFP, item A states that all land trusts "...that intend to submit a proposal must also be pre-qualified [with the Division of Budget] prior to the submission of your proposal(s)". (a) If an organization was prequalified for round 13, does that status carry forward to the HVAEP round? (b) Will you please provide the agency contact for the organization to check on prequalification status with DOB?
 - **A:** (a) Not necessarily. Once pre-qualified, the not-for-profit conservation organization must ensure that each of the required documents contained in its document vault is up-to-date.

According to the "<u>Frequently Asked Questions about Prequalification</u>" on the Grants Reform web page regarding "Grantees" –

15. Will I have to do this every year?

No. The beauty of Prequalification is that each non-profit will submit a Prequalification application once every three years. However, once the information is stored in the vault, the non-profit has an obligation to keep the information current or it runs the risk of losing its eligibility status. The online system has been designed to send out alerts to both the non-profit and the State Agency letting them know when a critical document is close to expiration.

(b) Regarding an agency contact, please refer to the "Frequently Asked Questions about Prequalification" on the Grants Reform web page regarding "Grantees" –

12. Who makes the decisions regarding Pregualification?

Once your application and all supporting documents have been submitted, the trained Prequalification Specialist within the State Agency with which you currently have the most contracts, or, if you are a new vendor, the State Agency with which you expect to have the largest contract, will review your materials and will be in contact with you if more information is needed to complete your file. <end of excerpt>

Lynne Swedick is the Department's Prequalification Specialist. Please contact her only if your document vault identifies the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets as the State Agency associated with your not-for-profit conservation organization. If your document vault has identified any other state agency, DO NOT CONTACT Lynne – she will be unable to view your document vault or to otherwise assist you. You may reach her at Lynne.Swedick@agriculture.ny.gov or 518-457-2080.

- **12.Q:** On page 7 of the HVAEP RFP, item C(2) states that "Any costs incurred prior to the start date of funding agreement shall not be deemed eligible costs under this RFP". Can you please clarify what the "start date of the funding agreement" will be?
 - **A:** As noted on page 6 of the RFP, the start date of the funding agreement (i.e., HVAEP contract) between New York State and applicant entity receiving an award shall be the date of the announcement of awards for this HVAEP RFP; we anticipate that the date will be approximately April 1, 2016.
- **13.Q:** The application in Grants Gateway requires a Site Address. Should this be the farm operation business address or the primary physical address of the parcels in consideration?
 - **A:** Your choice, but we recommend that the address be for the Farm Operation business that is located on the subject property(ies) that comprise(s) your proposed conservation easement project. If the Farm Operation is owned/operated by someone other than the owner of the subject property(ies), then you must select a single site address that is associated with the subject property(ies).
- **14.Q:** In multiple places of the HVAEP RFP there is reference to the "applicant" and/or "other project partners". Furthermore, Program Specific Questions, item (b) of the application in Grants Gateway, asks "If this is a Joint Proposal, please identify the partnering entity". Could you please clarify in the following circumstances if party would be considered "project partner" or "Joint Applicant":
 - (a) A municipality or county may provide a grant award which requires they hold certain rights in the conservation easement (e.g., Third Party Right of

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Enforcement) but not be named a co-grantee. Should the municipality or county be listed as a "project partner" or "Joint Applicant"?

- (b) Land Trust A and Land Trust B may work together on a project with the resulting conservation easement to be held by Land Trust A only. Land Trust B will hold an assignee role only in the conservation easement (and will not be a co-grantee). Should Land Trust B be listed as a "project partner" or "Joint Applicant"?
- (c) A private foundation, public entity or other funder may provide a grant award with no other role in the transaction or conservation easement. Should the funder be listed as a "project partner" or "Joint Applicant"?
- **A:** (a) Project partner. While either is an otherwise eligible applicant for HVAEP RFP, an entity would only be required to be listed as a Joint Applicant if it were to co-hold the resulting conservation easement with the applicant.
- (b) Project partner. Since Land Trust B will not co-hold the resulting conservation easement with Land Trust A, Land Trust B is not a Joint Applicant.
- (c) Project partner. None of the listed entities will co-hold the resulting conservation easement; thus, any of the listed entities would not be a Joint Applicant.
- **15.Q:** (RFP0129-HVAEP Page 3, Section II) Will there be any notifications to applicants if there are additions or changes made to RFP prior to January 29, 2016? Will all get listed at an easy-to-find place on the NYSDAM website, or on Grants Gateway?
 - **A:** Neither the Grants Gateway or the Department will send an alert to anyone. However, as noted in the RFP (page 3), these "Questions and Answers" have been posted on the Department's "Funding Opportunities" web page and are also available to download from the Grants Gateway portal.
- **16.Q:** (Program Specific Question 7 that describe criteria for Site Plan) (a) What is the definition of 'close proximity' to project boundary? As our map scope is determined by scale of imagery that will provide evaluators sufficient detail, it will be helpful to know this definition.
 - (b) Is it appropriate to submit one pdf file with two maps (i.e. one detailing the easement boundary and other real property interests in "close proximity", and a second map detailing the easement boundary, land planning, and significant natural public resources?)

- (c) Does the third part of this question [(3) iii] refer to partial ownership interest in the farm operation, or only in the land itself? Is it correct that "interest" refers legal ownership of some sort?
- (d) When completing our land use plans should we use the terms in our conservation easements or the state's terms? For instance, should our maps use our organization's terminology of Agricultural Structures Complex or NYSDAM's term of Rural Enterprise Zone?
- A: (a) "Close proximity" is intentionally not defined or otherwise illustrated in the RFP. Please use your judgment. However, the Department encourages each applicant to carefully consider the overall context of item (3) in which "close proximity" appears. To wit: "...AND (3) (if applicable) each parcel (or portion thereof) of real property that is NOT subject to the proposed conservation easement but is (i) embedded within the boundaries of this project or (ii) adjoining any boundary of this project or (iii) located in close proximity of any boundary of this project AND for which any landowner associated with this project also owns or may have a partial ownership interest therein."
- (b) Yes. Please remember that any upload is a single file, limited to 10MB in overall size. That being said, please be sure to submit whatever is specifically requested for a particular Program Specific Question and be advised that information that is not specifically requested for which you choose to additionally submit may not be considered by the reviewers of your proposal.
- (c) Since item (3) is regarding "each parcel ... of real property...," the reference to ownership is to that associated with real property not a business enterprise.
- (d) You may use the terms from your conservation easement. Please provide definitions of each of those "use area" terms so that all reviewers will know what each term means.
- **17.Q:** (Program Specific Questions 13i and 13k) Does proof that one of our staff led/taught a workshop qualify as "attendance" at a conservation easement and/or an agricultural economic development training session?
 - **A:** No to both questions.
- **18.Q:** Will the Department of Agriculture and Markets accept projects for funding consideration even while not funding the added costs of the provision itself that include a Preemptive Purchase Right (PPR) provision in the easement language?
 - **A:** Yes; a project employing a PPR mechanism does not render that project ineligible for funding consideration. Rather, the expense of the PPR mechanism is an ineligible project cost.

- **19.Q:** At the 75% and 25% cost-share levels, we are wondering if the State will accept projects where the Preemptive Purchase Right (PPR) language is written directly into the easement language provided, of course, that all other requirements are met for those funding levels.
 - **A:** Yes; a project employing a PPR mechanism does not render that project ineligible for funding consideration. Rather, the expense of the PPR mechanism is an ineligible project cost.
- 20. Q: We have a potential applicant who owns and farms 85 acres. He is currently leasing an adjacent parcel that is approximately 50 acres. Would we be able to apply for both the 85 acres and 50 acres in one application, if so would there have to be 2 separate conservation easements or would there only be 1 conservation easement? Or, would we have to submit 2 separate applications, with 2 separate conservation easements?
 - **A:** Provided this individual is the operator of the single Farm Operation that is utilizing the two properties under that one Farm Operation, then, yes, you may submit one proposal encompassing both properties. Since each property is owned by different owners, you should prepare a separate conservation easement for each property. For the scenario you described, you would not be required to submit this as two separate proposals.
- **21.Q:** (page 18 of RFP, section VIII.A.1) Item 3 states that "a letter signed by all participating landowners or a signed letter from each participating landowner" is required with the application. In the instance where a single farm operation runs on two properties (and we'd submit this project as one application) one parcel they own and an another parcel the farm is in contract to purchase with a closing scheduled before said conservation easement would be granted is a letter required from the landowner of second parcel given the already-existing contractual relationship between the two parties?
 - **A:** No, a letter from the current owner of the second parcel (the one that is presently under contract to be purchased by the current owner of the first parcel) is not required, but the letter from the current owner of the first parcel should acknowledge and explain that situation.
- **22.Q:** Do the MWBE compliance requirements include hiring of title searchers, appraisers, attorneys, surveyors?
 - **A:** On the Financial Worksheet, each of the following budget items are subject to M/WBE: (1) title insurance, (2) survey, (3) appraisal, (4) Grantee legal fees, and (5) baseline documentation report.

Accordingly, at a minimum, each HVAEP contract will require M/WBE documentation for each of those five items – whether your entity will be seeking a waiver or intend to hire an M/WBE for each of those budget items.

- **23.Q:** To establish "good faith efforts," is the applicant required to advertise for qualified MBE's and WBEs, or may it send letters to local businesses to solicit bids, and give preference to businesses that identify themselves as MBE and WBE (as per our Utilization Plan)?
 - **A:** As noted on page 14 of the RFP, please refer to 5 NYCRR §142.8 guidance on how the Department will determine your "good faith efforts."
- **24.Q:** May the hiring of the subcontractors, and M/WBE good faith efforts, take place after preliminary approval?
 - A: While that is possible, the Department would not recommend doing so. Please understand that while the State's approval of a funding agreement (i.e., a contract between New York State and your entity) under this HVAEP RFP is separate and apart from the State approving your M/WBE waiver request (or your hiring of an M/WBE), the Department is not authorized to make any disbursements to your entity until all M/WBE matters have been addressed in other words, not until acceptable documentation has been approved regarding each of the five budget items subject to M/WBE. Stated another way, your entity is free to obtain and submit the necessary documentation for M/WBE matters prior to your HVAEP contract being approved by New York State. We encourage you to pursue obtaining all necessary M/WBE approvals as early as possible in the overall contract process.
- **25.Q:** (a) May appraisals be completed prior to application submission or should we wait until after preliminary approval? (b) If an appraisal is completed at the time the applicant is submitted, should it be included in the application? (c) If an appraisal is completed prior to application submission (and prior to preliminary approval), will there be reimbursement for the cost?
 - **A:** (a) Any cost incurred prior to the start date of an HVAEP contract between New York State and your entity is deemed an ineligible project cost. Thus, any such cost shall not appear on the Financial Worksheet (and the performance-based budget attached to your HVAEP contract) and shall not be covered by State proceeds.

Furthermore, the vendor that prepared that contract deliverable may or may not be an M/WBE and/or your entity may not receive an M/WBE waiver approved by the State, which would have cleared the way for you to have hired that non-M/WBE vendor. If that should occur, the State would likely find your entity to be non-compliant with the provisions of the HVAEP contract and may rescind the HVAEP award offered to your entity.

- (b) None of the Program Specific Questions request that an appraisal be submitted as part of your project proposal please do not submit an appraisal in your proposal.
 - (c) No. Please refer to the answer provided for part (a) of this question.
- **26.Q:** Is a Title report and attorney letter completed only after preliminary approval, or should it be done before the application is submitted?
 - **A:** Please refer to page 13 of the RFP regarding the timeline associated with the submission of contract deliverables throughout the contract period. A title report and Grantee attorney letter regarding same must be submitted to the Department before the Department would initiate preliminary review, much less give its preliminary approval, of your proposed project. Furthermore, none of the Program Specific Questions request that those documents be submitted as part of your project proposal please do not submit those documents in your proposal.
- **27.Q:** Are any costs of completing the grant application reimbursable -such as attorney costs, and staff time, and reproduction costs, and previously prepared appraisals?
 - **A:** No, since all such costs occurred prior to the awarding of the HVAEP contract between New York State and your entity. Please refer to page 7 of the RFP.
- **28.Q:** Where are the site plan requirements?
 - **A:** The Department's <u>guidance document regarding land planning</u> can be found on the Department's web site. You may also connect to this document by clicking on the link on page 11 of the <u>HVAEP Applicant webinar presentation</u>.
- **29.Q:** Will any further webinars be scheduled?
 - **A:** No. However, a copy of the <u>HVAEP Applicant webinar presentation</u> is available on the Department's web site.
- 30.Q: Some members of our Agriculture and Farmland Protection Board were under the impression that in addition to writing letters of endorsement for FPIG Projects, that there would be a requirement for the Agriculture and Farmland Protection Board to rank projects that it receives. Based on review of the recently released RFP, I have not found a statement of such a requirement. Your confirmation that there is not such a requirement would be greatly appreciated.
 - **A:** The letter of endorsement from any County Agriculture and Farmland Protection Board is not required to contain a ranking of any proposal that it is endorsing. However, the Department would *encourage* each County Agriculture and Farmland

Protection Board to consider doing so since such indication from the Board would likely be important information to share with the proposal reviewers.

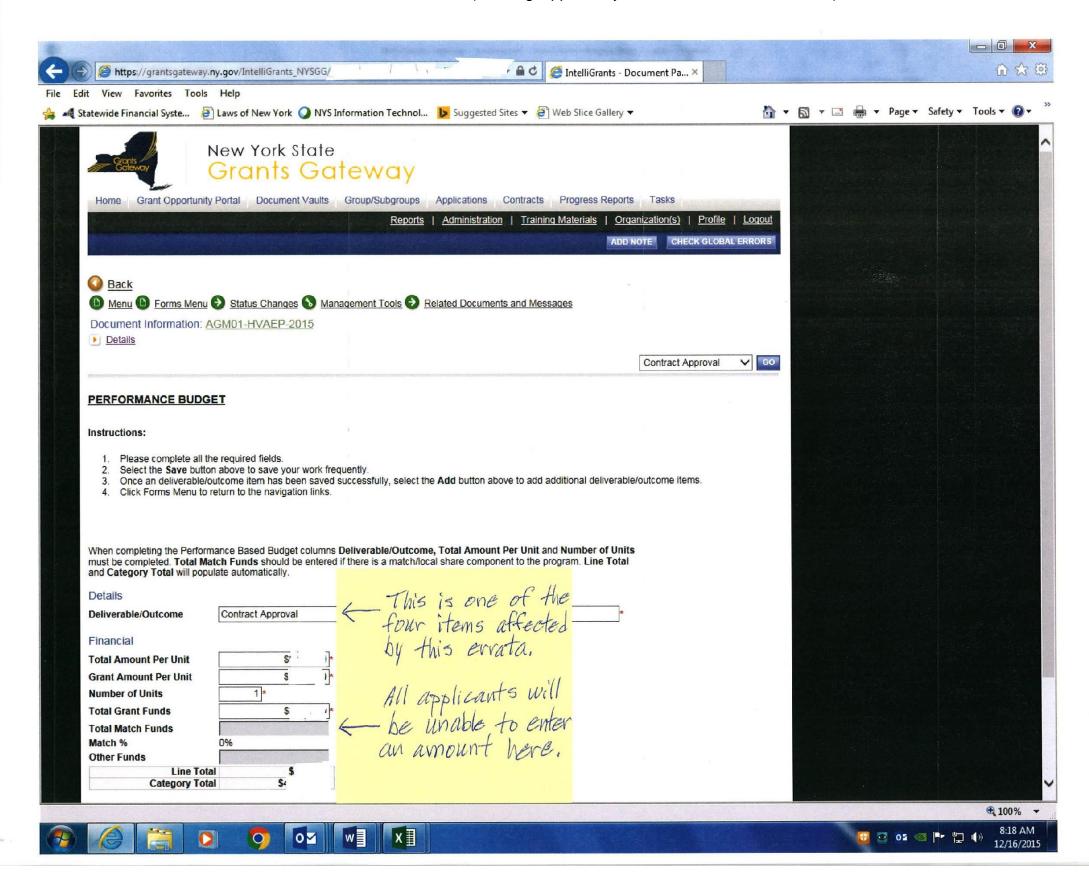
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APPENDIX A-1:

"Total Match Funds" of Performance Budget-Contract Approval of "Forms Menu"

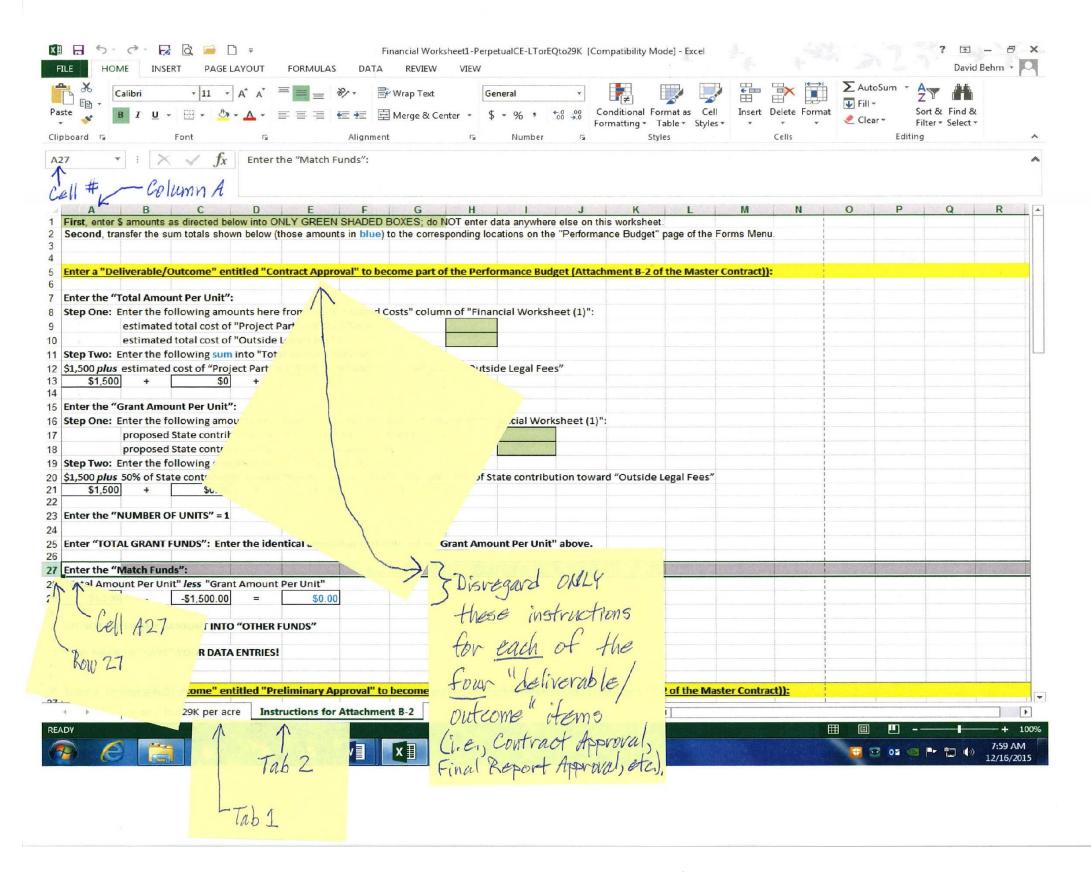
(Funding Opportunity announced October 27, 2015)



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APPENDIX A-2: Cell A27 of Tab 2 of Financial Worksheet(1)

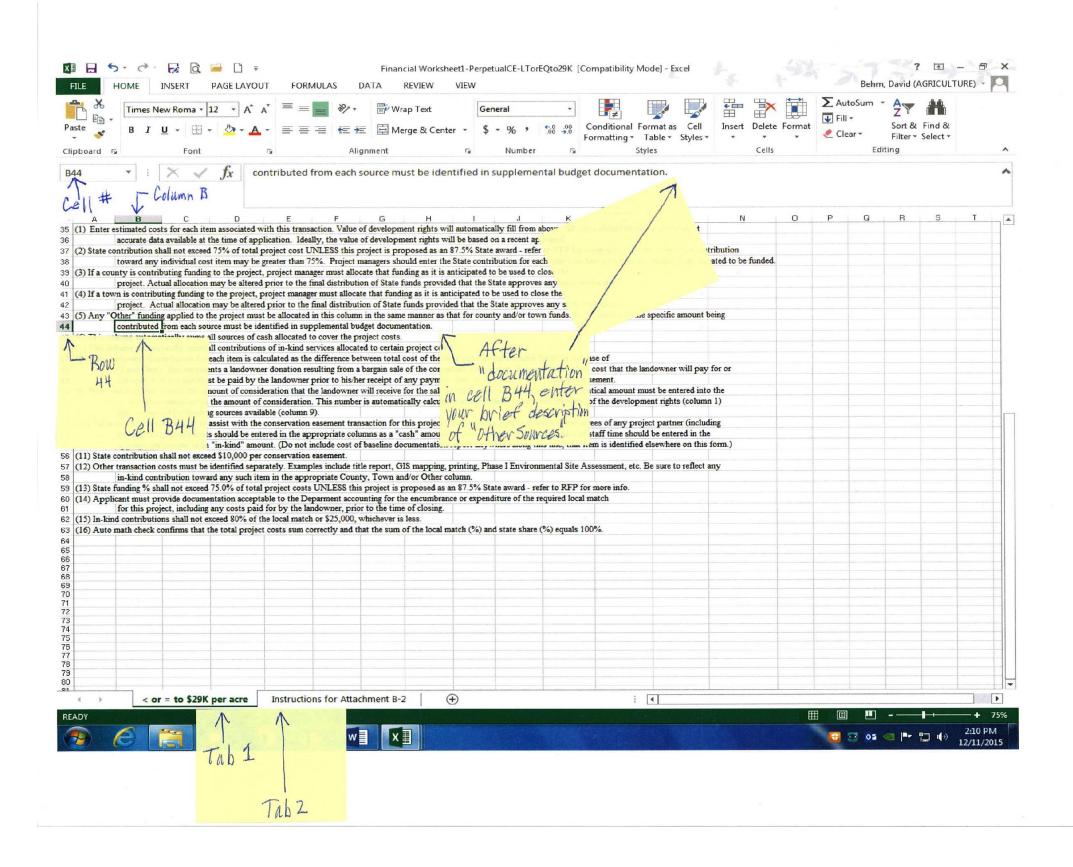
(Funding Opportunity announced October 27, 2015)



(Funding Opportunity announced October 27, 2015)

APPENDIX B: Cell B44 of Tab 1 of Financial Worksheet(1)

(Funding Opportunity announced October 27, 2015)



(Funding Opportunity announced October 27, 2015)

APPENDIX C: Cell I12 of Tab 1 of Financial Worksheet(1)

(Funding Opportunity announced October 27, 2015)

