NARRAGANSETT BAY ESTUARY PROGRAM

RWU Roger Williams UNIVERSITY

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Design, Engineering, and Permitting Activities to Advance Water Quality and Habitat Restoration and Enhancement Projects in the Narragansett Bay Region

July 20, 2026

I. DEFINITIONS

The following definitions apply for the purposes of this Request for Proposal (RFP):

- Design, Engineering, and Permitting Activities include site-specific designs, plans, and permitting. The "Design & Planning" steps 6-8 shown in Figure 1 are eligible; projects that complete steps 7 or 8 will be given particular consideration in scoring. Stakeholder engagement (Step 1) is strongly encouraged throughout the project development process and may be included in project budgets but should not be the sole focus of a proposal.
- Water Quality and Habitat Conservation and Improvement Projects refers to site-specific projects that seek to restore or enhance water quality and/or coastal and watershed habitats in the Narragansett Bay region. Project eligibility is addressed in further detail in Section V of this RFP. Please note that purchases of land and real estate are not eligible activities under this RFP.
- The Narragansett Bay Region includes 113 municipalities in the Narragansett Bay, Little Narragansett Bay, and Coastal Salt Ponds watersheds in Rhode Island, Massachusetts, and Connecticut (Figure 2; GIS map).
- Co-Benefits include the additional positive outcomes of water quality and habitat restoration and enhancement projects, e.g., flood reduction, increased safety for nearby and downstream communities, and improved public access to water resources.

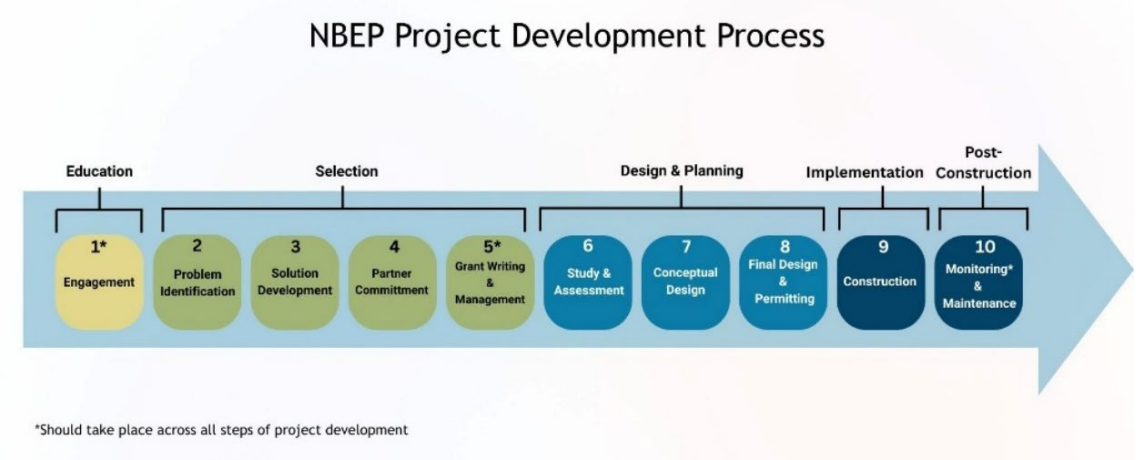


Figure 1. NBEP Project Development Process

II. OVERVIEW

The Narragansett Bay Estuary Program (NBEP), through its host, Roger Williams University (RWU), is issuing this RFP for design, engineering, and permitting activities to advance water quality and habitat restoration and enhancement projects within the Narragansett Bay, Little Narragansett Bay, and Coastal Ponds watersheds in Rhode Island, Massachusetts, and Connecticut (Narragansett Bay region). Federal funding is provided under the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) through EPA Cooperative Agreement #4T00A01721. Projects funded via this request will advance implementation of NBEP's mission and 2026 Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP). Projects should clearly advance CCMP implementation and at least one other local, state, or regional water quality or habitat improvement plan. Approximately **$880,000 is available with a proposal due date of Friday, October 2, 2026, and an expected award notification date of Friday, October 30, 2026**.

III. FUNDING DETAILS

A total of ~$880,000 is available from the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) through EPA Cooperative Agreement #4T00A01721. NBEP expects individual awards to range from approximately $50,000 to $250,000 and anticipates funding 5-7 projects. All funds are provided on a reimbursement basis. Match is not required. These funds expire on September 30, 2031 so all proposed work must be complete by that date, although 1- to 3-year project timelines are preferred.

IV. FUNDING TEAM

FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATION: RWU

RWU is NBEP's fiscal sponsor and will make formal funding awards, establish agreements, receive invoices, and provide reimbursement to awardees.

PROJECT OVERSIGHT: NBEP

NBEP's Grants Subcommittee will select projects while NBEP will manage agreements, evaluate reports and deliverables, and provide technical assistance to awardees.

V. PROJECT REQUIREMENTS

LOCATION

Projects must take place within the boundaries of NBEP's study area (Figure 2). This area includes 113 municipalities in the Narragansett Bay, Little Narragansett Bay, and Coastal Salt Ponds watersheds in Rhode Island, Massachusetts, and Connecticut. Note that the links above direct you to ArcGIS layers that will allow you to confirm your project is in NBEP's study area.

ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

Eligible applicants include, but are not limited to, state or local government agencies, tribes, interstate agencies, private non-profit organizations and institutions, and academic or educational institutions. For-profit organizations or individuals are not eligible; however, they may be subcontracted by the applicant. Those eligible to respond to this RFP become a "subawardee" if selected for funding. Although multiple partners may be involved with a project, a single subawardee will be the recipient of funds, and partners receiving funds through the subawardee will be considered subcontractors. The subawardee has primary responsibility for the completion of all tasks including those undertaken by subcontracted partners.

Please note that applicants must meet the following minimum requirements to receive and manage federal funds before funds are subawarded:

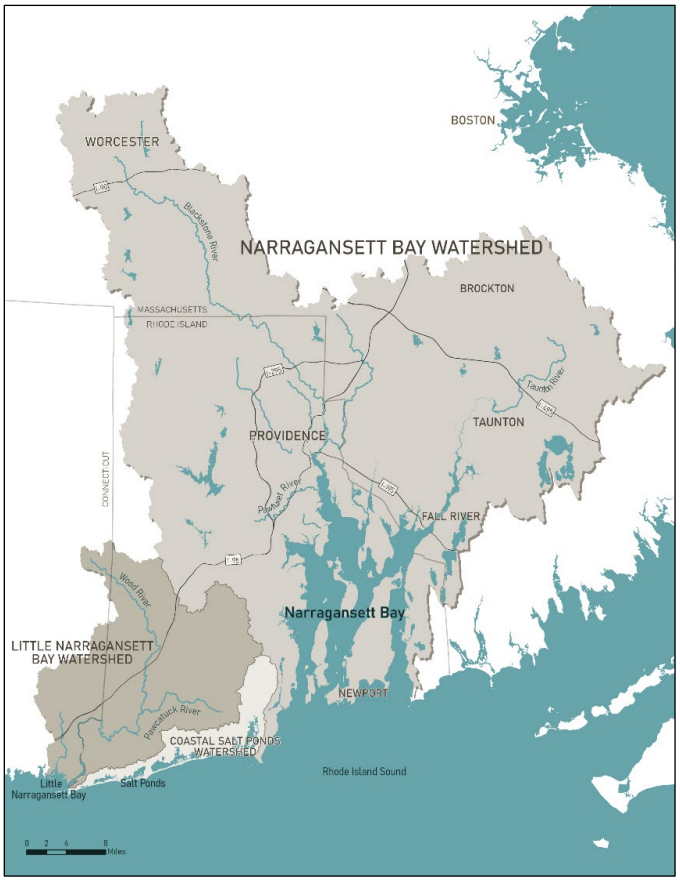


Figure 2: Narragansett Bay Estuary Program Study Area.

1. Organization is legally registered in its country of operations;
2. Organization has or will adopt a financial conflict of interest policy prior to subaward, or agrees to use RWU's policy;
3. Organization has identified no reasons (local conditions, laws, or institutional circumstances) that would prevent an independent accountant from performing an audit of the organization;
4. Organization is not subject to an active exclusion and not currently debarred, suspended, proposed for debarment, or declared ineligible for the award of contracts by any federal agency;
5. Organization has an active registration in SAM.gov and an assigned Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) number;
6. Organization's accounting records can:
    a. separate the receipts and payments of an RWU award from the receipts and payments of the organization's other activities, and
    b. record expenditures on the RWU award according to budget categories such as salaries, supplies, travel and equipment;
7. Organization can provide proof of Comprehensive General Liability and Workers Compensation insurance upon request;
8. If the project involves purchasing, the organization has or will adopt a purchasing / procurement policy creating standards in the procurement of supplies and other expendable property, equipment, real property and other services, and;
9. If the project involves staff time, the organization can provide signed timesheets with invoices. Note that none of the funds appropriated in this RFP shall be used to pay the salary of an individual at a rate in excess of Executive Level II ($228,000 per year for 2026).

RWU's Subrecipient Financial Questionnaire, which selected subawardees will be required to complete prior to award, provides more information on subawardee requirements. NBEP recommends that all applicants review the Questionnaire and contact NBEP with questions or concerns. NBEP and RWU will be available to assist selected subawardees to develop required policies and procedures.

ELIGIBLE PROJECTS

Eligible projects include site-specific design, planning, and permitting activities that advance future construction to restore or enhance water quality and wildlife habitats in the Narragansett Bay region (Figure 2, link to online map). See definitions in Section I. Projects that demonstrate co-benefits such as improved flood resiliency and increased public access are encouraged as long as the primary project purpose is improvement and/or conservation of water quality and wildlife habitats. Projects must demonstrate support from site owner (see Section VI of this RFP).

Examples of eligible projects include (but are not limited to) planning, design, and permitting to:

- Restore or enhance coastal and watershed habitats such as rivers, floodplains, riparian zones, vernal pools, salt marshes, and seagrasses;
- Improve river and stream habitat connectivity and continuity, for example through dam removal or undersized or perched culvert replacement;
- Improve or restore connections between rivers and streams and their floodplains;
- Restore connections between coastal salt marsh and upland transition zones;
- Improve the connectivity of salt marsh habitat, for example, with ditch filling, berm removal, or tidal creek reestablishment;
- Reduce pollutant inputs to river and coastal ecosystems, for example through nature-based non-point source and stormwater pollution control projects;
- Improve or provide opportunities for water infiltration in urbanized landscapes, for example through removing impervious surfaces or installing rain gardens.

Applicants must demonstrate how the proposed project(s) will contribute to the implementation of the NBEP 2026 CCMP and at least one other water quality or habitat plan or priority list, including (but not limited to):

- Watershed Plans / Watershed-Based Plans;
- Nonpoint Source Management Plans;
- Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) documents;
- Habitat plans or priority lists, e.g., Rhode Island Coastal Wetland Restoration Strategy, Massachusetts Salt Marsh Framework, etc.;
- Special Area Management Plans;
- Wildlife Action Plans;
- Anadromous Fish Plans.

INELIGIBLE PROJECTS

The following types of projects will **not** be considered:

- On-the-ground construction;
- Purchase of land or real estate;
- Projects where the primary purpose is not to advance site-specific plans for habitat or water quality conservation and improvement;

- Conventional “gray” infrastructure projects (e.g., wastewater treatment plant upgrades, sewer line installation, etc.);
- Projects on private property with no public access;
- Projects without an environmental enhancement component;
- Projects with a *primary* goal of research, monitoring, public access, trash/debris removal, or public outreach and education;
- Actions required to settle a formal enforcement action or included in a court order;
- Lobbying activities attempting to influence specific ‘legislation’ as defined by the Internal Revenue Service.

MATCH

Match is not required for this RFP and will not factor into project scoring. If match is included in a proposal, it must be tracked and included in financial reports and invoices. Match can be provided with cash, in-kind services, or a combination of both.

DELIVERABLES

1. Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP) if required. See below for additional information about this deliverable.
2. Quarterly reports and invoices delivered to the designated NBEP Project Manager no later than the 10th day of April, July, October, and January for the duration of the project. At a minimum, reports should include a summary of activities, problems and opportunities encountered, and activities planned for the next quarter. NBEP will provide quarterly report and invoice templates that outline these and other reporting requirements.
3. Final planning documents, including but not limited to workshop notes, studies, assessments, plans, permits, and any data that underlie the document (e.g., modeling outputs, ArcGIS layers).
4. Final report in Word format including a description of all project activities, planned next steps after project completion as appropriate, a projection of the project’s environmental benefit when constructed, and a description of new funding obtained or being pursued as a result of planning activities funded with this NBEP subaward. NBEP will provide a final report template that outlines these and other reporting requirements.
5. Photographs as appropriate, included as separate attachments (not embedded in a document).
6. Approved final report in Adobe PDF format following the incorporation of feedback from NBEP.

DELIVERABLE OWNERSHIP

All deliverables funded under this RFP in whole or in part shall be made available to RWU, NBEP, and EPA. These parties shall have unrestricted right to use these materials.

INSURANCE REQUIREMENTS

RWU and NBEP require subawardees to maintain insurance, including Comprehensive General Liability and Workers Compensation insurance, at all times for the term of the subaward at least at the minimum level as defined by the State of Rhode Island. More details on such insurance requirements will be provided to applicants selected for funding.

QUALITY ASSURANCE PROJECT PLAN (QAPP)

A Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP) is a planning document that provides the plan for obtaining the type, quantity, and quality of data needed to support environmental decision making. If a project is using data to make a decision, then a QAPP is needed. Environmental data include information collected directly from field measurements, produced from models, and compiled from other sources such as databases or literature and evaluated for a project. Data are defined as both natural and social science information collected and analyzed for a project. A QAPP is also needed when using or developing a computer model to aid in decision making.

Projects that involve environmental data collection operations will be responsible for developing and submitting a QAPP to NBEP for review once an agreement between RWU and the awardee are in place. The QAPP must be approved by EPA and the NBEP Staff Scientist prior to any data collection or analysis. Development of the QAPP can be completed as a task under this project and included in the proposal narrative, timeline, and budget. Allow a minimum of 90 days for the review and approval of your QAPP. It is appropriate for an applicant to utilize or build upon an existing, relevant, approved QAPP if one exists. For more information about QAPPs, visit the EPA Quality Program website and NBEP's Grants Forms and Guidance webpage. Questions regarding QAPPs should be directed to Courtney Schmidt, NBEP Staff Scientist, at Courtney.Schmidt@nbep.org.

COMPLIANCE WITH SUBAWARDEE REQUIREMENTS

Subawardees must comply with the terms and conditions in their agreement with RWU, to include timelines for deliverables and reporting, as well as all EPA General Terms and Conditions.

VI. PROPOSAL SUBMITTAL AND EVALUATION

PROPOSALS

A single-step proposal process (no letter of intent or pre-proposal) will be used for this RFP. Note that proposals will be eliminated from consideration that do not contain all information requested or that exceed the stated page limit. Hyperlinks may be included in proposals, but the Grants Subcommittee is not obligated to review them. Minimum font size allowed is 11 point. The following information is required:

Cover Letter

One (1) page cover letter, printed on official letterhead and signed by an authorized representative of the project applicant. The cover letter must state that you are applying for funds under this RFP and acknowledge that funding is provided on a reimbursement basis.

Application Cover Page

One (1) page cover page using the format provided as Appendix 1. Appendix 1 offers this cover page as a fillable .pdf or applicants may download the fillable form from NBEP's Forms and Guidance webpage.

Project Narrative

Up to eight (8)–page text narrative that describes the following (not necessarily in this order):

1. Project consistency with this RFP, the 2026 NBEP CCMP, and other local, state, or regional plans (applicants must cite at least one plan in addition to the NBEP CCMP);

2. Existing need/problem that the project will address;
3. Project purpose, importance, benefits, co-benefits, and expected impacts, including a projection of the number of acres of habitat or river miles that will be improved or expected pollutant reduction when the project is constructed, or another appropriate metric of environmental benefit (see Appendix 1: Application Cover Page for example metrics);
4. Technical basis of the project and any prior planning that has taken place;
5. Project timeline, including expected tasks, outputs/deliverables, and outcomes;
6. Ongoing or planned meaningful engagement with appropriate community members or groups;
7. Expertise of key project participants in relevant subject areas and a description of the applicant/participants' successful completion of past projects similar to the proposed project;
8. Potential adverse impacts on water quality, wildlife, and quality of life in surrounding communities and how they will be investigated/addressed;
9. Plans for executing and funding future project construction.

Figures
Up to five (5) pages of maps, photographs, and other figures included as appendices.

Project Budget
One (1) page budget using the format provided as Appendix 2. The Project Budget provided as Appendix 2 is an example only; an editable MS Excel version of this sheet is provided separately on the NBEP website. The filled form should be saved and added to the final PDF file submission.

Budget Narrative
One (1) page summary narrative that provides a brief justification for the proposed costs in terms of completing project deliverables, an explanation of how indirect costs are calculated, description and justification for any subcontracts, and information on current and pending financial resources for non-federal cost share or matching funds that are intended to support the project. Note that entities intending to use a Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate must provide documentation of their rate. Applicants without a Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement may include a de minimis indirect cost budget line not to exceed 15% of modified total direct costs. If match is offered, include a description of the committed cash and/or in-kind match. If letters, forms, or other formal documentation of match are available, please provide (these do not count toward the one-page limit).

Land Control Permission and Letters of Support
Project site owners (if not the applicant) and partners identified in the proposal are expected to provide letters confirming their endorsement of and participation in the project.

OPTIONAL PRE-SUBMITTAL CONSULTATION

Applicants may reach out to the RWU and NBEP contacts listed in Section X of this RFP to clarify project eligibility and seek answers to proposal scope and budget questions in advance of submittal.

SUBMITTAL

Submit your proposal and all supporting information as a single PDF document addressed to Darcy Young, Executive Director, at **info@nbep.org**. If received successfully, you will receive an email from NBEP with the subject line "RFP Submission Confirmation" confirming your submission. **Applications must be received by 11:59pm EST on Friday, October 2, 2026**.

EVALUATION

All proposals deemed complete and received by the deadline will be provided to the NBEP Grants Subcommittee for review, scoring, and pursuit of consensus funding decisions. This is an independent subcommittee consisting of NBEP Steering Committee members and other regional experts. The Project Scoring Sheet provided as Appendix 3 will be used to guide consideration of proposals by the subcommittee. Note that RWU and NBEP staff are not members of the subcommittee and will not participate in scoring. Note that the Project Scoring Sheet is included for information purpose only and is not to be filled out by the applicant.

VII. FUNDING ADMINISTRATION

RWU's Office of Research and Sponsored Programs will administer awards under this RFP. Once selected by the NBEP Grants Subcommittee, awardees will be notified in writing by RWU, and development of an agreement between RWU and the subawardee will begin. The funding team aims to have agreements in place for all awards by December 18, 2026 so expenditures can begin by January 1, 2027. Specific exceptions may be made to allow expenditures starting on the date of award announcement if the awardee provides justification.

VIII. RFP SCHEDULE

RFP released	**July 20, 2026**
Proposals due	**Friday, October 2, 2026, 11:59 PM EST**
Proposal review by Grants Subcommittee	October 2026
Subaward selections announced	~October 30, 2026
Agreements for subawards in place	~December 18, 2026
Earliest project start date	~January 1, 2027
Complete project work	~December 31, 2029
Funds expire	**September 30, 2031**

IX. PUBLIC INFORMATION

Since this RFP and subsequent awards are supported by federal funds, all materials submitted to NBEP may be made available for public review. RWU, NBEP, and EPA expect to use the abstract noted in Appendix 1 and quarterly reports to produce online updates and to post final project deliverables and reports on the NBEP website in the Resources Library and the Funded Projects Map. Grantees must acknowledge NBEP and EPA as sources of project funding in all external communication materials, including but not limited to press releases, webpages, public and technical presentations, etc. NBEP will provide acknowledgement guidelines with grant agreements.

X. CONTACT INFORMATION

RFP Questions
Darcy Young,
NBEP Executive Director
dyoung@nbep.org
(401) 633-0550

QAPP Questions
Courtney Schmidt,
NBEP Staff Scientist
Courtney.Schmidt@nbep.org
(401) 633-0550

Financial Questions
Bob McCarthy
RWU Research & Sponsored Programs
rmccarthy@rwu.edu
(401) 254-3552

XI. APPENDICES

1. Application Cover Page – fillable .PDF provided in RFP package, or download from NBEP's Forms and Guidance webpage.
2. Budget Format – example only; download an Excel template from NBEP's Forms and Guidance webpage.
3. Project Scoring Sheet—provided for information purposes only; not to be filled out by the applicant.

Appendix 1: Application Cover Form

Please extract this form or download it from the NBEP website and include it in your application.

Project Title:

Project Location:

Project Applicant:

Applicant Contact: **Applicant Contact Email:**

Funding Request: $ **Match Funds: $**

Project Start Date: **Project End Date:**

Number of acres of habitat and/or river miles the project will improve AND/OR pollutant reduction (e.g., area of impervious surface removed or treated, volume of stormwater prevented or reduced, pounds of pollutants avoided) the project is expected to achieve when constructed (estimate):

Deliverables: (check all that apply)
☐ QAPP ☐ Data Collection Surveys (listed in QAPP) ☐ 10-30% designs ☐ 30-60% designs
☐ 90-100% designs ☐ Permits ☐ Construction Bid Documents
☐ Other: _____

PROJECT ABSTRACT

☐ I acknowledge that funds awarded through this RFP will be provided on a reimbursement basis.

Appendix 2: Budget

Visit the NBEP website to download an Excel version of this budget template

PROJECT BUDGET			
BUDGET CATEGORY *(add/remove itemizing lines below as necessary but do not delete major categories)*			**PROPOSAL REQUEST**
A. Personnel Total *(list individual names and titles below):*	Hours*	Rate*	$ -
B. Fringe Benefits_____**%** (e.g., 10% of total personnel costs)			$
C. Travel Total (estimate number/purpose of trips below):			$ -
D. Equipment Total (itemize below):			$ -
E. Supplies Total (itemize below):			$ -
F. Contracts Total (itemize below):			$ -
G. Other Total (itemize below):			$ -
H. TOTAL DIRECT COSTS (sum of rows A-G)			$ -
I. INDIRECT COSTS_____% of_____:			$
J. TOTAL PROJECT COSTS (sum of H-I):			$ -

*Timesheets will be required to document personnel costs for invoicing. If your organization cannot provide timesheets, please contact NBEP staff.

Appendix 3: Project Scoring Sheet. DO NOT COMPLETE, FOR INFORMATION ONLY

Project Title: _____

Project Applicant: _____

Final Total: _____

Under Evaluation Criteria, unless otherwise noted, score each criterion from 0-3, where "0" does not meet the criterion or the criterion is not applicable to the action, "1" partially meets the evaluation criterion, "2" meets the criterion, and "3" exceeds the criterion. For each criterion, unless otherwise noted, multiply the Weight Column by the Score Column to create the Total Column, and then add the Totals to create the Final Total. The Final Total should also be copied above.

Screening Criteria*	Yes	No
1. The project meets the "Project Requirements" in Section V of the RFP.		

*If you answer 'No' to this criterion, do not further score.

Evaluation Criteria	Weight	Score	Total
1. Quality. Proposal narrative and budget information are sufficiently detailed, realistic, and clear.	2		6
2. Importance. The proposal describes a significant problem or need that the project and/or future construction of the plans will address. The project is identified in or will otherwise implement at least one local, state, or regional water quality improvement or habitat restoration plan.	3		9
3. Benefits. The planned project, when constructed or realized, will result in tangible, measurable, and lasting benefits to water quality and/or habitats, and demonstrates co-benefits such as improved resiliency and public access.	3		9
4. Community Engagement. The application has already meaningfully collaborated with appropriate stakeholders (e.g., municipal officials, site users, site owners, neighboring landowners and communities) when developing the project, or obligates to do so as part of the project.	2		6
5. Probability of Success. Project is well-conceived, consistent with laws and technical standards, considers long-term sustainability, and otherwise has high probability of success. Project will advance plans to permit- or construction-ready status. Project timeline is reasonable. Applicant has or will have access to the necessary expertise and capacity to carry out the project based on completion of projects of similar scope, duration, and complexity.	3		9
6. Adverse Impacts. Consequences of future implementation work that could have negative impact on natural resources and people (e.g., long-term maintenance, trash, pests, safety, resident displacement, aquatic organism smothering or displacement) are acknowledged and adequately managed.	1		3
7. Cost. The cost of the project is line with similar activities undertaken in the region, generally accepted costs, and current market conditions.	2		6
		FINAL TOTAL:	