INNOVATIVE TECHNOLOGY FOR HABs GRANT PROGRAM

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

When will the awards be announced?

The time from start to finish for this process typically takes five to eight months after the application portal closes.

What is the performance period for the grant?

The performance period may vary and depends on a host of factors. The preferred performance period ranges between a year and a half to two years after the date of the grant's execution.

How much funding is available?

This fiscal year, the Innovative Technologies for HABs Grant Program has received a $10 million appropriation. The program strives to fund as many high-quality Innovative Technology grant submissions as possible within existing budgetary constraints. There are no specified minimum and maximum funding requests.

Is there a match requirement?

There is no match requirement. However, DEP welcomes applicant fiscal contributions towards funding the grants for which they are applying.

What are the minimum and maximum grant awards available?

Grant funding for each individual awardee will vary based on the project proposal, cost-effectiveness and other factors. Awards have ranged from $31,741 to $4 million. Higher cost projects would be expected to deliver higher value data and information that would, if successful, result in bigger successes in addressing HABs.

Who can apply for an Innovative Technology grant?

Local governmental and non-state entities are eligible to apply for an Innovative Technology grant. This includes counties, municipalities, nonprofit public universities or colleges, special districts and non-profit organizations registered to do business in the state.

Private, for-profit vendors are not eligible to apply for or directly receive a grant and should not submit a grant proposal. Notwithstanding, vendors may partner with eligible governmental or non-state entities to implement their technologies, subject to state and local procurement requirements and the eligible entity may submit a proposal

What types of projects are considered?

DEP follows recommendations made by the Blue Green Algae Task Force regarding the types of projects considered for selection. Projects must be demonstrably cost-efficient, environmentally safe and scalable. These include innovative technologies that help mitigate, clean up or prevent HABs through nutrient reduction in Florida's fresh and estuarine water bodies and technologies with the potential to detect, monitor and forecast HABs to enable more proactive responses.

What are some key considerations made by DEP when contemplating the merits of funding a proposal?

The following is a list of considerations influencing funding selections made in the past. This list is not all-inclusive.
- Is the technology innovative (i.e., is it new technology or a new application of known technology)?
- Has the technology been previously shown to achieve the proposed benefits without causing environmental harm?
- Is the technology scalable?
- Does the technology possess water quality benefits?
- At what stage is the project in its developmental timeline (theoretical, lab scale, mesocosm scale, ready for field testing)?
- Will the technology be applied in an area with a water quality restoration plan (e.g., basin management action plan [BMAP] or reasonable assurance plan [RAP])?
- How difficult will the project be to permit?
- Do the project's potential benefits outweigh its cost?
- Does the project yield or generate a product that can be marketed to offset its implementation costs?
- Can this technology be rapidly deployed to a problem spot?

What types of innovative technology projects have been selected?

Projects previously selected for implementation can be categorized into four types:
- Nutrient reduction projects, which reduce the supply of nutrients (nitrogen and phosphorus) and can help decrease the intensity and duration of HABs.
- Removal and reduction projects focused on addressing algae in waterways, including chemical, biological and mechanical control methods.
- Projects that help to better predict and monitor the formation of HABs.
- Prevention projects that help prevent the formation of HABs.

Please see the DEP Innovative Technology Grants Story Map for project proposals that have previously received funding support.

Where are projects located?

Projects are all located within the State of Florida and generally found in areas with a history of HABs, an adopted BMAP or RAP, a heightened concern for future blooms and in areas where the project presents the greatest water quality benefit or prevents future blooms. Projects that test or treat water in an offline system rather than in an actual waterbody are encouraged.

Should we apply if we are still awaiting award notifications from previous years?

We recommend submitting proposals from the previous year along with proposals for any new projects that you wish to pursue this fiscal year. Additionally, you can contact the Innovative Technology for HABs Grant Program at InnTech_HAB@FloridadDEP.gov for questions regarding any resource limitations/constraints you may run into if awarded funding for all or a portion of the grants you applied for. The Innovative Technology for HABs Grant Program generally assumes applicants can execute every grant for which they have submitted a funding proposal. There are no limits on the number of proposals that may be submitted.

What is the additional document that must accompany an Innovative Technology for HABs grant proposal?

The additional document is the Innovative Technology Grant Proposal Funding Breakout form. Instructions on how to download and upload this form are found at the end of the webform on the grants portal.

What are the minimum tasks found in every Grant Work Plan (GWP) for Innovative Technologies grants?

The tasks specified within the GWP will vary between grants. Grants testing a technology in waters will require water quality monitoring. We do require every GWP, at a minimum, to include a Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP), Public Education and Final Report/Presentation tasks. These tasks must be accounted for in the Funding Breakout Form submitted as part of the project proposal.

How long does it take between the award announcement and execution of the grant agreement?

Generally, it takes between three to six months from the time of the award announcement to the signing of the final grant agreement. A host of factors can affect this timeline. A well-written proposal often leads to a shorter time span between funding award and execution.

Can the Innovative Technologies grant team assist with the funding proposal process?

We are not able to fill out the proposal for you; however, we are available to answer questions clarifying what makes a project innovative and to provide information about the webform's content. We encourage applicants to reach out to us well in advance of submitting their proposal for this assistance. Applicants may contact us by email at InnTech_HAB@FloridaDEP.gov. Discussion with our staff does not guarantee the selection of your project for funding.

Can I make changes to my proposal after it is submitted into the portal?

The HAB Innovative Technology Grant team reviews proposals as they are submitted to the portal. We may contact applicants to seek clarification and discuss options for improving project descriptions, reducing costs and removing potential friction points (e.g., permitting obstacles) in their submissions. We do not require applicants to re-submit their project due to this communication. To allow time for dialogue, we recommend early submissions.

When is the portal period open?

There is no set timeframe for when the grants portal opens but the portal typically stays open for a minimum of 30 days. The exact date the portal will close is posted on ProtectingFloridaTogether.gov/Grants. To receive updates, sign up for notifications through the Preference Center | Water Quality Dashboard.

What laboratory certification is required for submission of water quality monitoring data?

The Office of Water Policy and Ecosystems Restoration, which oversees the Innovative Technology Grant Program, requires grantees to utilize National Environmental Laboratories Accreditation Conference (NELAC) certified laboratories to perform the analysis of sampling presented within their final reports and grant work plan deliverables. This ensures that project data meets acceptable standards of quality. Applicants must account for the cost of using NELAC-certified labs within their Funding Breakout forms when applying for Innovative Technology grants.

The department's lab is unable to support these projects through its lab.

What restrictions are there on large equipment purchases?

Equipment, software and software license purchases exceeding $5,000 per item/unit in cost are not allowed under this program. Rental and lease of equipment is allowed.

How many grant applications are awarded funding for a given year?

There is no fixed number of awarded projects. The number of funded proposals depends on the number of high-quality proposals, the amount of funding requested and the amount of funds the program has available to award. The record number of grants awarded in a fiscal year is 15. The lowest number awarded is 9.

Can I apply for grant funding after the portal closes?

We cannot accept project proposals after the portal closes and all proposals must be submitted via the portal. Entities that missed the submission window, including incomplete applications, must wait until the portal opens the next fiscal year to apply.

How do I best ensure that my project proposal meets the requirement of being "innovative"?

We highly recommend applicants read over all the information found on the Innovative Technology for Harmful Algal Blooms Grant Program Story Map to prevent duplication of previously funded efforts and to align their submissions with the approved categories. Applicants should especially focus on the individual descriptions of previously awarded projects and how they are categorized. Applicants concerned about a project's eligibility and "innovativeness" are encouraged to contact the program area by email (InnTech_HAB@FloridaDEP.gov) to discuss these topics before submitting a project proposal.