

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

HEALTHY USES, HEALTHY WATERS

Updated May 7, 2009

Q: Will the Great Lakes Protection Fund support projects other than those submitted in response to this RfP?

Yes. This RfP is developed to supplement our general funding guidelines. Other project ideas that are consistent with those guidelines are welcomed at any time.

Q: How much money should I ask for?

Budget requests should reflect the full amount of funds necessary to complete team building, initial background research, and pilot project design. The average level of support for this type and amount of work has been \$150,000-\$250,000 in the past, but applicants should expect awards in the \$100,000 (or less) range. Matching funds are not necessary. If the team has acquired matching funds, please indicate that in the preproposal budget.

Q: What is a reasonable timeline for a project?

The project should last as long as necessary to complete the work. The Fund expects the design phase of these projects to last 10 to 18 months.

Q: What factors will you consider in the preproposal evaluation process?

The most successful preproposals will identify novel water use strategies that: make the waters of the Great Lakes basin, and the natural resources that depend upon them, healthier; create useful and actionable information in the design phase; and, indicate that the multidisciplinary and multi-institutional project team will work together well. We will evaluate preproposals based on: their potential to create positive ecological change in the basin; the amount of innovation in the proposed strategy; the value of the new information to be created in the design phase; the level of collaboration from the full range of stakeholders; and how well the proposed effort fits in a portfolio of supported projects.

Q: The RfP discusses the “health of water systems” as the focus for the projects. What does that mean to the Fund?

The Fund’s expert advisors suggested that the full framework of water impacts be considered when designing projects. This includes: 1) the impacts on source waters (due to withdrawal or in-stream use) including—flow and path alteration, thermal and other quality changes, and the biological

changes that occur as a result; 2) impacts associated with use including—emissions from electric power required to move water, increased chemical use, or other secondary impacts; 3) the impacts on receiving waters (post use) including—path and flow alterations, assimilative capacity impacts, and related biological, physical, and chemical results. Project teams should be as specific as possible in describing the impact of the proposed project, how that will be measured, and who on the team will do the work.

Q: I understand water conservation has practices that limit the use of water, such a low flow toilets or showerheads. Does the Fund hope to encourage new practices or better adoption of current practices?

The Fund hopes to support teams that target new and already known methods of managing water use for specific resource outcomes, measure the impact, and design tools that allow others to link practices to results. The U.S. Water Resources Council defines water conservation as activities designed to: 1) reduce demand for water; 2) improve efficiency in use and reduce the losses of wasted water; and, 3) improve land management practices to conserve water. The Fund's interest is to see the impacts of water withdrawals, in-stream uses, and drainage uses identified, decreased, and mitigated. In that regard, an entire range of new practices is possible and current practices can be better targeted. The Fund is not interested in supporting projects that do not identify changed ecological conditions as the purpose, that are solely designed to reduce economic costs, or that are simply designed to promote practices without regard to outcome.

Q: What is a “portfolio” of projects?

A portfolio is a set of projects that is designed to be more than the sum of the individual projects. Project portfolios minimize the risk of project failure by diversifying our investments and ensure that complex issues get attention in key areas. Two factors dominate our thinking in assembling project portfolios. First, the project strategies must relate to one another as complements. That is, they take approaches that depend on different (and generally uncorrelated) factors for success. In this way, the set of projects tests strategies that can work under a variety of conditions and each individual effort can provide useful lessons that help create a robust set of strategy tools. Second, each project should focus on one part of the larger issue. Work can be segmented by sector, by target audience, by impact category, by time horizon, by hydrologic system, or by other factors. Together, these factors create a search image for a set of projects. The specific dimensions of this project portfolio will be created after we receive your ideas about where the best opportunities exist.

Q: Does my organization need to be located in the basin or a Great Lakes state to qualify for funding?

No. Activities affecting the basin's ecosystem are becoming increasingly distant in space and time from the shores of the lakes. The solutions will be as well.

Q: I have a project idea related to the RfP that was not included in the illustrative project descriptions; can I still submit a preproposal?

Yes. Teams are encouraged to submit ideas that meet the intent of the RfP whether they appear as an illustrated idea or not. We expect that many teams will propose different and better ideas than those presented as illustrations. The list of projects is meant to be illustrative of ideas of the types of projects that teams could consider and improve upon. It should not be considered an exhaustive or exclusive list.

Q: I have a project idea, but I have not secured a commitment from many of the team members; can I still submit a preproposal?

Yes. The Fund recognizes that it may be difficult to secure a commitment from all of the necessary team members prior to the preproposal submission deadline. However, if a full proposal is invited, the project manager must have a complete team assembled prior to the full proposal submission.

Q: I have a project idea but am having difficulty securing a partner to test the prototype. Will you provide support for my current team to work on the early stages of prototype development and to secure a final pilot group for testing?

The Fund expects to support the design phase of projects in this round. We welcome ideas that require additional groundwork and team-building before a full project can be undertaken. While better-developed projects may receive funding priority, if the project idea is particularly innovative, the Fund will consider inviting a full proposal.