Great Lakes Learning Exchange

Fit to Final Proposal

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September 24, 2025

Presentation Outline

- Overview of General Principles of Reviewing Grant Opportunities
- Some Rules of Thumb for Applying for Grants
- Details on the Great Lakes Restoration Community Grant Program: Uses and Application Process

Don’t Chase the Money!

Focus on Funding Opportunities that clearly align with your mission and the programming you are doing (or intend to do) to further your mission.

- This requires you to take the time to clearly understand the funder’s goals and intended outcomes.
- It also means you need to be sure what **your** organization’s focus is and focus are and where its passion lies.

Swim Downstream When Possible

Identify positive ongoing activities and build on their momentum (regardless of whether you are actively partnering in them).

See if those organizations that are already doing good work in your target geography will give you a letter of support and/or partner with you if appropriate.

Empower your Community and keep them Engaged

- **Engage the public** in deciding what your priorities are. Provide background information on the problem(s) you are addressing and frame the issues so that they can give you **informed input**.
- **Keep engaging them** through steering or advisory committees, volunteering, jobs, tasks, newsletters, meetings, social media, etc.
- If deadlines don’t permit you to seek their input on creating the strategy, seek their support for the strategy you develop.

Meet the People where they Are

- Meet in facilities that are accessible and conveniently located for the people and where **they** feel comfortable and welcome.
- Choose meeting times that fit their schedules.
- Overcome barriers to participation by providing transportation and childcare if necessary.
- Get the word out! (Houses of worship, neighborhood businesses, yard signs, door-to-door, etc.)
- Be a good host! Serve food and beverages – provide a meal as part of the program if that will increase participation.

Tell a Good Story!

- Tell a story about your project area.
- Identify a problem/issue that needs to be addressed
- Propose a solution to the problem or issue
- Describe how the funding you are seeking makes the solution possible

Some Rules of Thumb for Applying for Grants

Digital Requirements

- Do you need to use a particular software/on-line application format or process?
- If so, who is going to be your software/digital technician?

Deadlines, Deadlines, Deadlines

- Make a list of all deadlines in the application process as well your team's "task completion deadlines."
- Put those on your calendar, your organization's calendar, and all team members' calendars.
- Keep those deadlines "front and center."

Comb through the Grant Guidelines very Carefully

- Make a list of every requirement so that you have your own checklist of things that need to be included in the final application.
- Make sure you know what is eligible for funding and what is not eligible for funding (eligible activities vs ineligible activities)

Comb through the Grant Guidelines very Carefully

- Identify any matching requirements and whether those can be “in-kind” or whether they must be monetary (or either).
- Is there a leverage requirement? Some grants don’t require leverage, but it is good to point out that you are leveraging other investments, efforts, and activities that complement or further your program.

Comb through the Grant Guidelines very Carefully

What are the Narrative Requirements?

- Font and type size
- Page limit/word count/character count limit (there may be different limits for different sections of your application)
- Double space, single space, etc.?

Make a list of the specific data, exhibits, budgets, etc. the Application Requires

- Census data showing economic hardship
- Vacant Property statistics
- Public Health
- *Project Area Map*
- *Project Budget*
- Applicant Organization Information

A Thought on Drafting Your Narrative Sections

Draft your narratives in a separate document. “Cut and paste” them into the on-line application system.

It is easier to edit a stand-alone document, and you can use its word count/character count function to make sure you are not exceeding the grant limits.

Letters of Support Required or “Nice to Have”

- Know what the grant requires and/or encourages with respect to Letters of Support.
- Identify the organizations that you would like to have issue a letter of support. Include any entities that you intend to collaborate or partner with on the project, especially if you are leveraging their activities or discussing them in your proposal.

Letters of Support Required or “Nice to Have”

- Make it as easy as possible for an organization to give you a letter of support!
- Ghost write a draft letter of support that is unique to each organization. “If you aren’t willing to write it, why should they?”

Ghost-writing a Letter of Support

- Start with a generic draft **one page letter** that has three sections:
- (a) brief introductory paragraph that says “the ABC organization is committed to … and enthusiastically/strongly, etc. supports [your organization’s] request for funding,
- (b) one or two paragraphs describing your project and what the money will make possible, and
- (c) a short conclusion thanking the funder for their consideration [your organization’s] proposal, etc. and reiterating the impact funding your project will make.

Ghost-writing a Letter of Support

- Go to each organization's website and verify their mission/purpose and their President/Executive Director.

- "Personalize" each draft letter of support with this information and possibly with a specific activity that each organization is doing that complements the program that is now seeking funding.
- "Personally and Graciously" approach them for a Letter of Support.

Give Plenty of Lead Time to all Organizations on which you are relying!

- Letters of Support and/or Authorization
- Image/Map Creators
- City Council Resolutions
- Permission to enter Real Property