Building A Strong Narrative

LISCIF 2027 Funding Cycle

Connor Yakaitis - October 28, 2026

Letter of Intent vs. Full Proposal

Think Vision/Goal vs. How To Achieve Them

- Your Letter of Intent (LOI) should be considered as your outline that guides your full proposal.
- LOI should focus on story-telling that outlines your vision. Specific details will go into the full proposal.
- LOI should be intended to capture the funder’s attention and make them want to learn more.
- It should also get the funder thinking about the problem and what their role can be in addressing it.

LISCIF 2027 Funding Themes

Your Letter of Intent should focus on one or more of the following:

- Clean Waters and Healthy Watersheds
- Thriving Habitats and Abundant Wildlife
- Sustainable and Resilient Communities
- Informed and Engaged Public

Funding Priorities

After identifying your theme, take it a step further by focusing on:

- Projects that result in quantifiable pollutant prevention or reduction.
- Restoring habitat within the Important Coastal Habitat Types targeted by LIS Partnership.
- Projects that foster a diverse balance and abundant populations of fish, birds, and wildlife.
- Public engagement, knowledge, and stewardship.
- Projects that enhance community resilience and sustainability.
- Planning and design that set-the-stage for implementation of water quality projects, eligible habitat restoration projects and resilience projects.
- Community-based science projects.
- Data management and integration projects.
- Other similar activities that the applicant proposes, and EPA approves, that are consistent with Section 119 of the Clean Water Act.

Think About Greater Context

How does your project make a larger impact?

- Even if your project is local, does it serve a greater community? Does it bring in different communities?
- Funders like to see their funding play a role in a larger story.
- Example: If your project is focused on a river, talk about the impacts of your work as it relates to communities/ecosystems down river.
- Point to other projects that have succeeded and how this one would continue the momentum
- Highlight building momentum: The Long Island Sound recovery is an amazing story… How does my project continue that story?

Positivity Always Wins!

- Despite the negativity in the world, focus on the positive impacts of your project.
- While you should identify the problem or problems your project is trying to address, the language of your LOI should largely focus on the opportunity your organization has.
- Positive reinforcement is much stronger than doom and gloom
- Your LOI and project score should draw an emotional connection to your audience, in this case the funder


"There is no greater agony than
bearing an untold story inside you."
-Maya Angelou

FOOD FOR THOUGHT:

(1) What would I change in the world?

(2) What gives me hope?

(3) How can I share my story with others to make the biggest impact?

THINK OF IT AS A JOB INTERVIEW!

Narrative: Your Cover Letter (Letter Of Intent, LOI)

- Personal, emotional and concise.
- Connect authentically with your audience.
- Grab their attention and bring it home!

Grant Application: Your Resume & Interview

- Data & research driven.
- Emphasize audience and funding potential.
- Longterm thinking.


YOUR PERSONAL STORY


IS YOUR
ORGANIZATION'S
STORY

GOOD STORIES SHOULD

- **Make people feel** - people act when they feel
- **Be remembered**- people will remember a powerful story
- **Create understanding** - stories are how we've communicated since the dawn of time
- **Cut through clutter** - too much online (dis)information these days, people crave genuine stories
- **Build organizational structure** - it shows your audience you hear them and appreciate them
- **Wake people up** - stories create emotion, they inspire, they anger and most importantly they give hope

TIPS FOR BUILDING A NARRATIVE

- **Short & Sweet** - People naturally have short attention spans, especially in today's world. The simpler the better.
- **Show, Don't Tell** - Use senses and emotions to tell your story. If you get too caught up in the details, you'll bore your audience.
- **Think story versus an essay** - clear and concise is key
- **Be original** - unique stories get noticed and we are ALL unique!
- **Limit your data** - numbers will come later, pick a few (3 max) figures to include in your narrative.
- **Look ahead** - A good story can reminisce about the past while looking towards the future. Funders want to visualize their impact!
- **Diversity & Equity** - How does your story relate/impact others?

NEXT STEPS

- Write down 5 reasons why you love your job and think about mission/values/goals etc.
- What stories have emerged from your experience?
- Ask each board & staff member to do the same.
- Identify patterns, similarities etc. and, as an organization, combine your list into a collective 3 values.
- These values will shape your ultimate goals, mission and reasons why you deserve funding.
- Each person finds three more people to join the conversation and make a huge difference!

Thank You!

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