



Frequently Asked Questions

Q: I have a great idea but cannot secure a commitment from all the team members in time for the deadline. Can I still submit a preproposal?

Yes, the Fund recognizes that it might not be possible to secure team member commitments prior to the deadline. Please describe who will be involved, even if commitments aren't secured. The entire team needs to be assembled prior to submitting the full proposal, if invited.

Q: Will the Fund support the research needed to develop a new or better technology?

Possibly, provided that the team is ready to test how that technology can enable behavior that improves the health of the Lakes. The Fund does not support research that doesn't connect to an action strategy. We will look for indications that the users of a new technology are involved in the work, that there is a market for its application, and that there is a plan for deploying this technology across the basin. The Fund is interested in launching technology-enabled strategies, not simply building new technologies.

Q: What is a pilot or demonstration project?

We consider a pilot project to be the first deployment of an innovative behavior change, in one or more settings, designed by and on behalf of an audience whose behavior will shift based on the result. A key factor for the Fund is the nature of that audience, their involvement in the design and execution of the work, their willingness to act on the results, and whether the strategy being launched removes a barrier to action that improves the health of the Great Lakes. Our interest is to launch new strategies, not to support technical trials.

Q: I see the word “scale” used in the RFP. What does this mean to you?

The Fund seeks impact at the scale of the Great Lakes basin. How the team gets to basin-wide impact needs to be clear in the proposal. Successful teams get impact at scale by creating new value that shifts markets, policies, and/or business-as-usual behaviors. These shifts can occur in a few settings or be more widespread. The most robust path to impact is transformation and systems change, not just a communication, replication, or marketing-driven adoption strategy. We also encourage applicants to consider the partnerships needed to work across the basin. We generally do not support work that is only focused in one area or community.

Q: I have a project idea but need resources to fully develop a collaborative team and complete workplan. Can you provide support to help build that team and solidify our project plan?

The Fund can provide design support for early-stage project ideas that require additional groundwork and team-building before a full project can be undertaken. If the project idea is particularly innovative, the Fund may consider such an option.

If your project idea is not fully formed, we encourage you to contact us at startaconversation@glpf.org. We welcome the opportunity to talk to people in this position, and we will help you determine if your idea is a good fit for the Fund.

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 in our examples or not. We expect that many teams will propose different and better ideas than those presented



as illustrations. The examples in the RFP are intended to spur creative thinking. They are examples of the type of work we're interested in and should not be considered an exhaustive or exclusive list. So, if you have a potentially transformative idea, please share it.

Q: I have a project idea that does not fall within the three focus areas highlighted in the RFP. Can I submit a preproposal?

Yes. The Fund recognizes there may be ambitious project ideas that fall outside of the focus areas in the RFP. Project ideas consistent with our [funding guidelines](#) and [strategic priorities](#) will be considered.

Q: What are you looking for in project teams?

We are looking for groups of individuals and/or organizations that must work together, often at the edge of their expertise, to achieve something new. We are looking for engaged partners that are invested in the work and not just included in name only. A critical partner for all projects is the intended user of the new solution or idea. Users should be partners in the design, development, and testing of any new solution.

Q: My project will likely result in the creation of new intellectual property. What is the Fund's approach in those circumstances?

If the project will create products that could be patented or copyrighted, please describe in your preproposal what you expect to create and how you will treat the creation of new intellectual property. Applicants selected to receive awards are required to execute an agreement that includes compliance with reporting requirements and the Fund's Intellectual Property Policy. The Fund's [website](#) describes its approach to intellectual property. Teams should familiarize themselves with this page. The Fund will work closely with the lead organization during contract review to ensure that the contract language on intellectual property is agreeable to both parties.

Q: How many proposals will you support? How much funding do you plan to award in 2026?

We do not have a specific target number of projects in mind; however, the Fund does hope to support a portfolio of complementary projects. Past funding announcements have typically resulted in four to ten projects. The Fund is seeking to invest \$4M in new project activity in 2026, including projects from this RFP.

Q: How much money should I ask for?

Budget requests should reflect the full amount of funds necessary to complete the proposed work. Budgets in the past have ranged from \$250,000 to \$1.5M. 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. Multi-year projects are typical.

Q: Are Canadian institutions eligible to apply?

Yes, applicants can be based in the United States or internationally, including Canada.

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

The short answer is no. Since the Fund chooses to finance teams of institutions and individuals, some of these team members often have addresses outside of the Basin. For example, sometimes important



experts are located in other parts of the US or internationally. The work, however, needs to benefit the Lakes, and any planned pilot projects are generally located in the Basin. The quality of the team and the impact potential of the project, not the addresses of participating organizations, are what is most important.

Q: How does the Fund evaluate the success of its Projects?

A successful team launches a new way for people to interact with the basin's water resources, succeeds in creating positive environmental change, and—by the end of the project—sees its “product” increasingly adopted, improved, or otherwise deployed for the benefit of the basin. Less successful teams fall short in one or more of those areas.

Q: What happens after I submit a preproposal? What should I expect?

Your preproposal will first be evaluated by staff team as it's received. The Fund will extend invitations for full proposals in mid-May. If you are invited to submit a full proposal, the Fund will provide feedback on your preproposal as well as personalized guidance on the content of your full proposal. Typically, about six weeks are provided to develop the full proposal, during which time we'll have several conversations to provide the information and support you need in developing your submittal.

Once the Fund receives your full proposal, Fund staff and a panel of outside technical reviewers with relevant expertise will review your submission. You will then receive additional, customized guidance based on those reviews and will be asked to revise your proposal. Typically, about two weeks are provided for these revisions. The revised proposal will be reviewed and the Fund's Board of Directors will make final investment decisions. The time from a proposal invitation to a funding decision takes about four months. In some cases, the development timeline may be adjusted to accommodate the unique needs of a project, or to align with other Fund needs or priorities.

Q: Can I reach out to you to talk about my idea ahead of time?

Yes, you can contact us if you want to discuss a concept. We often play an active role in helping to develop projects to position them for maximum impact. However, please note that, due to the high volume of applications, our availability may be limited during the RFP period. Please reach out to Collin Knauss at cknauss@glpf.org if you have a question about the content of your preproposal.

Q: How do I submit my preproposal?

Please email your preproposal, including a [coversheet](#) and CV/Resume of the Team Lead to preproposal@glpf.org.

Q: Can I submit more than one preproposal?

Yes, you can submit more than one preproposal.