

# Community Partnerships Grant Program (CPGP) Request for Applications (RFA)

## Important Dates and Contact Info

Letter of Intent (LOIs) are Due: **September 11, 2026**

Proposal submissions and attachments will be submitted by applications through the Good Grants portal; this portal can be accessed here: [Log in | Alliance for the Great Lakes](#).

For all inquiries related to this RFA, email Ashley Brummel, Grant Manager, at [CommunityPartnershipsGrant@greatlakes.org](mailto:CommunityPartnershipsGrant@greatlakes.org). All proposal submissions and attachments will be submitted on the portal, linked here [Log in | Alliance for the Great Lakes](#).

In-person workshops, locations, dates and registration links:

- Chicago, July 22, 2026, 4-6:30pm, register by clicking [HERE](#)
- Gary, July 23, 2026, 4-6:30pm, register by clicking [HERE](#)

A recorded webinar that provides an overview of the program is accessible here:  
<https://youtu.be/eunqYtrSs4>

Virtual office hours to discuss LOI submissions will be available **July 27-Aug 28, 2026**. Office hours are a supportive environment for locally serving organizations where questions can be explored regarding programmatic and geographic eligibility, project development, budget guidance, and building partnerships for local impact. To request virtual office hours please schedule a meeting using this [calendly](#) link. Please attend one in-person workshop or listen to the recorded webinar before you schedule a meeting during office hours.

## Overview

The Alliance for the Great Lakes is administering the Community Partnerships Grant Program (CPGP), funded through the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI). Projects supported through this grant program must be located in this project eligibility area: [Southern Lake Michigan](#) sub-watersheds. Applicants can determine eligibility by clicking on this link: [Southern Lake Michigan](#), referring to the static maps in Appendix 1 and asking questions by scheduling time during Office Hours. These instructions are for applicants interested in submitting a Letter of Intent (LOI) and, if selected, a Full Proposal through the Good Grants portal. [Good Grants](#) serves as the official portal for application submission, document uploads, and ongoing grantee reporting.

## GENERAL APPLICATION GUIDANCE

Good Grants ([Log in | Alliance for the Great Lakes](#)) will serve as the official portal. Supporting documents requested can be submitted through the portal in Word or PDF format, and the budget template should be submitted in Excel. If applicants are unable to use the portal, please reach out to Ashley Brummel at [CommunityPartnerships\\_grant\\_admin@greatlakes.org](mailto:CommunityPartnerships_grant_admin@greatlakes.org) to discuss an alternate submission process.

## QUESTIONS AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

All questions can be submitted to the Alliance team at [CommunityPartnerships\\_grant\\_admin@greatlakes.org](mailto:CommunityPartnerships_grant_admin@greatlakes.org). Technical assistance webinars and templates (including budget and QAPP guidance) will be available on the program webpage found here <https://greatlakes.org/cpgp>.

## APPLICANT FAQs AND ADMINISTRATIVE GUIDANCE

Applicants are encouraged to review the CPGP Applicant Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) before applying. The FAQ provides guidance on using the application portal, required attachments, communication procedures, and post-award administration. The FAQ is available on our webpage here <https://greatlakes.org/community-partnerships-grant-program/frequently-asked-questions/>.

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## Program Information

Alliance for the Great Lakes (Alliance) entered into a cooperative agreement with EPA to develop a new funding program under the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI). The newly-formed Community Partnerships Grant Program (CPGP) will support implementation of GLRI projects, within the project eligibility area (click on active link or refer to static maps in Appendix 1), in communities where these projects are needed most. The Alliance for the Great Lakes has partnered with Calumet Collaborative, Faith In Place, Friends of the Chicago River, and Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission who will support applicants with their submissions and throughout the grant process. As part of this grant program, support will also be provided to awardees to ensure successful project implementation and durational success.

## GEOGRAPHIC FOCUS

Projects supported through this grant program will fund eligible GLRI projects within the Southern Lake Michigan watershed (eligible project boundaries). This geographic region includes a collection of HUC-12 subwatersheds to define the project's eligibility area. Please use this interactive map to assess whether your proposed project is within the eligible area: [Interactive Map of the Community Partnerships Grants Program](#), or refer to the static maps in Appendix 1. If you have questions about whether your project is within the eligible area, please schedule time to discuss during Office Hours.

## How to Apply

The Alliance for the Great Lakes (Alliance) will select grantees through a two-step application process. The first step is an open Letter of Intent (LOI). LOIs selected to advance will be invited to submit Full Proposals. Both steps are competitive; Alliance's request for a full proposal does not guarantee funding for that proposal.

Any eligible organization may submit an LOI or multiple LOIs. In consultation with an independent advisory committee, the Alliance will select LOIs for further consideration as Full Proposals. In some cases, Alliance may suggest changes to the scope of work or budget in the LOI, to be included in the Full Proposal.

### **Full Proposals will be accepted by invitation only, following Alliance's evaluation of LOIs.**

Similar to the process for LOI proposals, Alliance will select Full Proposals for funding in consultation with an independent review committee and EPA. Alliance may elect to partially fund proposals or may request other project modifications prior to finalizing awards.

**To be considered for funding, LOI and Full Proposal applications must meet the requirements outlined in this RFA and appendices, including federal grant requirements incorporated by reference.**

LOI and Full Proposal applications should be submitted through the online portal [Log in | Alliance for the Great Lakes](#). In addition to the guidance provided in this document and on the web page, there will be two in-person workshops held in Chicago on July 22, 2026 from 4-6:30pm, register by clicking [HERE](#) and in Gary on July 23, 2026 from 4-6:30pm, register by clicking [HERE](#). A recorded webinar that provides an overview of the program is accessible here:

<https://youtu.be/eunqYttrSs4>. Virtual office hours will be provided upon request throughout July 27-August 28, 2026. We encourage both applicants and identified sub-applicants to join the conversation with us. Office hours are helpful for:

- **Programmatic and Geographic Eligibility** We can answer questions you have about what is eligible and can be funded through this program
- **Project Development** We can help as you frame your project and narrative for GLRI terminology, and ensure local leadership and impact
- **Budget Guidance** We can support you in capturing ALL expenses, and understand approved vs. restricted expenses
- **Matchmaking Assistance** We can aid community-based organizations to identify technical and capacity project team partners

These office hours are intended to create a supportive environment where questions can be explored, ideas can be refined, and partnerships can be strengthened. To request virtual office hours, please use [calendly](#). We have partnered with Calumet Collaborative, Faith In Place, Friends of the Chicago River, and Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission to support applicants with their submissions and throughout the grant process. Please reach out to [CommunityPartnershipsGrant@greatlakes.org](mailto:CommunityPartnershipsGrant@greatlakes.org) to learn more about the support available. For those invited to submit full applications, office hours and 1:1 meetings will be available October 5-November 2, 2026.

### **Schedule** (all time is in Central Standard Time)

|                      |                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|----------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| July 13, 2026        | Letters of Intent (LOIs) released/announced                                                                                                                                                |
| July 20-July24, 2026 | In-person Workshops<br>Chicago on July 22, 2026 from 4-6:30pm, register by clicking <a href="#">HERE</a><br>Gary on July 23, 2026 from 4-6:30pm, register by clicking <a href="#">HERE</a> |
| July 27-Aug 28, 2026 | Office hours for LOIs                                                                                                                                                                      |
| September 11, 2026   | LOIs Due                                                                                                                                                                                   |

|                                         |                                                                                                                                                             |
|-----------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>October 2, 2026</b>                  | <b>LOIs Decision notification emails sent;<br/>invitations to submit full proposals</b>                                                                     |
| <b>October 5, 2026-November 2, 2026</b> | <b>Office Hours for accepted applications</b>                                                                                                               |
| <b>November 13, 2026</b>                | <b>Full Proposals Due</b>                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>December 21, 2026</b>                | <b>Full proposal notification emails sent</b>                                                                                                               |
| <b>January 8, 2027 – March 8, 2027</b>  | <b>Rolling virtual announcements with projects<br/>after grant agreements; Feedback provided<br/>upon request; Office hours for accepted<br/>applicants</b> |
| <b>March 15, 2027</b>                   | <b>Subaward start dates</b>                                                                                                                                 |
| <b>September 15, 2028</b>               | <b>Awardees complete projects</b>                                                                                                                           |

## Awards

### SOURCE OF FUNDS

As part of the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI), the Community Partnerships Grant Program (CPGP) is part of the largest investment in two decades. All 2026 grants under CPGP will be awarded, overseen, and administered by the Alliance for the Great Lakes (Alliance), which is responsible for sub-awardee selection, funding, and oversight.

### Anticipated Awards

In 2026, Alliance plans to award a total of \$1,125,000 for final design and permitting projects, which can be awarded up to \$300,000, with a total of 3-6 awards anticipated.

### GLRI Alignment, Measures of Progress (MOP), and Funding Priorities

The Community Partnerships Grant Program (CPGP) aligns with the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) and supports the goals of GLRI Action Plan IV by addressing the following Focus Areas. Projects are required to contribute to at least one of the following GLRI Measures of Progress (MOP):

- number of acres where activities have been conducted to control aquatic/terrestrial invasive species
- number of gallons of untreated stormwater runoff captured or treated
- miles of Great Lakes shoreline and riparian corridors restored or protected
- acres of coastal wetland, nearshore, and other habitats restored, protected, or enhanced.

## Official source for GLRI performance metrics:

*GLRI Action Plan IV Measures Reporting Plan (January 2026)*

EPA's Stormwater Calculator Tool, <https://www.epa.gov/water-research/national-stormwater-calculator>

For general background on the GLRI and its focus areas, see the [EPA's GLRI program page](#).

**Final Design and Permitting.** Applicants are required to demonstrate that their project will result in a final design and are prepared to secure permitting for an on-the-ground project contributing to one or more of the identified GLRI MOPs in a community where GLRI projects are needed most. If awarded, project sub-recipients must include implementation-ready project concepts that are poised to access federal funding in the future as one of their deliverables.

Awarded projects will need to advance projects from conceptual or preliminary design phases into the final design phase and finalize engineering plans and other related tasks that position projects for implementation. Proposed projects are not expected to achieve immediate environmental or conservation outcomes by the end of the grant period. However, proposals should demonstrate that the project, when implemented, will meet GLRI outcomes, outputs, and measures of progress.

Proposals which are likely to be more competitive are those which include a comprehensive, transferrable approach and demonstrate contributions to broader-scale implementation across a community, region, or watershed in the eligible project area and/or that demonstrate cost-effective approaches that result in larger environmental benefit compared to the total cost. Proposals that describe plans to increase the transferability of the approach and to engage key partners, community members, and stakeholders are also likely to be more competitive. Proposed projects are not required to obtain permits by the end of the grant period. Instead, projects should result in demonstrated readiness to move a designed project to the restoration phase by showing that the resulting project design would meet requirements for environmental review and permitting. Proposals should demonstrate an understanding of the different, relevant permitting considerations to be addressed. Additionally, proposals should describe planned activities to engage permitting officials at various levels of government throughout the design process, including how those activities will prepare the project for submission of permitting applications.

Proposals should demonstrate that the project, when complete, will achieve all the following requirements and deliverables:

- Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) that clearly articulate a role for organizations in communities where GLRI projects are needed most that support final design and permitting applications

- 90-100% final designs and potentially engineering plans
- Detailed cost estimates
- Completed within 18 months from the start of the grant
- Demonstrate that the resulting project design will be sufficient to meet requirements for environmental review and permitting.

**Recipient Support and Community Benefits.** Applicants are encouraged to identify one or more optional Recipient Support and Community Benefits outcomes and MOP (see list below). If identifying optional outcome(s) and MOP, applicants must explain how their project will be more successful if one or more of the capacity building MOPs below are included as complement to their proposed final design and permitting project. Projects focused solely on community capacity building outcomes and measures of progress **will not** be considered. Applicants will be awarded more points if they include optional outcomes and MOPs, especially if the applicant or one of their partners has never before received GLRI or federal funding. Projects including optional MOPs can allocate up to 25% of the total project budget for the execution of those MOPs.

Here is a short list of the optional MOPs which applicants can include as part of an eligible project:

#### **Stakeholder Engagement and Community Benefits**

- The number of municipalities, local, state, federal government entities, and community-based organizations participating in the project
- The number of people engaged in a workforce development activity
- Number of representatives engaged from the community where the proposed project is located
- Number of families and high school age youth engaged in implementation and/or stewardship of the GLRI project

#### **Financial and Project Management Capacity Building**

- Submission of financial management strategy and/or project management workplan for the proposed GLRI project

#### **Project Implementation and Long-Term Maintenance**

- Documentation that demonstrates project implementation readiness (e.g. long-term monitoring, workplan, and site maintenance plan) is completed.
- Number of implementation funding opportunities identified, including a descriptive list of identified opportunities to apply for when designs are complete.

## Period of Performance

The expected award date of CPGP subawards is **March 15, 2027**. Work must be completed by **September 15, 2028**. Projects must begin incurring costs against the grant within the first three months (first reporting period) following the award.

## How to Identify where GLRI Projects are Needed Most

The overarching goal of this grant program is to invest in projects where they are needed the most. We aim to help advance GLRI projects that will realize the most positive impacts for waterways, communities, and ecosystems. To help the reviewers understand why your project is needed, applications will need to describe the importance of the proposed project for the part of the watershed and community where it is located.

## Eligible Applicants and Community Partners

Eligible entities, such as a non-profit organization with 501(c)(3) status, municipalities, houses of worship, educational institutions, school districts, and soil and water conservation districts that represent Great Lakes communities can apply directly to the Community Partnerships Grant Program (CPGP). We also strongly encourage applicants to partner with organizations and/or agencies that are located in the community where the proposed GLRI project is located and that can play a role in ensuring durational success.

Proposals must target communities experiencing or affected by environmental and human health risks or harm. As such, all subaward projects should be community-driven or community-led. Public-private partnerships are encouraged, consistent with competitive federal procurement requirements noted in [Appendix 4](#).

For-profit businesses and organizations and nonprofit organizations exempt from taxation under section 501(c)(4) of the Internal Revenue Code that engage in lobbying are not eligible to apply. International organizations and individuals are also not eligible to apply. Federal agencies are not eligible recipients of funding but may be included as partners in proposals submitted by eligible recipients.

## Multiple Applications

Organizations may submit multiple LOIs or applications, either as a lead organization or as a partner on another organization's application. Multiple applications must be submitted separately. Each application will be evaluated independently.

## Land Control, Permissions & Private Property

Most CPGP-funded projects will take place on public land or waters; however, CPGP may fund work on private land or buildings where there is a clear public benefit in support of the priorities, and where the applicant can provide an assurance of lasting impact – for example, through a long-term operation and maintenance agreement, conservation easement, deed restriction, or other agreement with the landowner.

Applicants that are not the sole property owner must, prior to the award, demonstrate permission from the landowner(s) for any access, alteration, and use necessary to complete and maintain the project. This may take the form of partnership commitments, letter(s) of permission, or other memoranda of understanding (MOU) that state an agreed upon outcome of the proposed project will be an executed protection agreement (e.g. conservation easements, deed restrictions, or other type of environmental covenant) designed to protect the project from future development, if such agreement doesn't already exist.

Environmental permits do not need to be approved prior to award; however, the applicant must demonstrate a clear understanding of permitting requirements and schedules in the application. As with projects on publicly-owned property, project sites on private land must include permanent signage acknowledging GLRI funding. Projects cannot occur on federally-owned property.

### **Achievement of Project Metrics of Success**

Upon completion of a CPGP-funded design and engineering project, applicants will be required to summarize results. Projects will use metrics established by the GLRI under its Action Plan Summary. Projects need only to report on the subset of metrics directly relevant to the funded work. As needed, Alliance will assist grant recipients in assessing the results of the work for inclusion in the final report.

### **EPA and GLRI Regulatory Requirements**

Projects funded under this regrant must comply with EPA Assistance Agreement Regulations (2 CFR Part 200, Universal Grant Guidance, and Part 1500, EPA Supplemental Regulations), GLRI Programmatic and EPA general Terms and Conditions, and all applicable federal cross-cutting authorities (e.g., NHPA Section 106). The EPA will assist recipients in determining their Section 106 obligations.

**Quality Assurance and Quality Control (QA/QC):** Projects involving environmental data collection or generation must follow EPA QA/QC requirements and, if applicable, prepare a Quality Management Plan (QMP) or Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP). Most design projects will utilize or generate some kind of environmental data and require a QAPP or other quality documentation. Alliance will work with selected recipients and EPA to determine the appropriate level of quality documentation for selected projects.

Federal Terms and Conditions: Applicants must comply with EPA General Terms and Conditions for Assistance Agreements. See [https://www.epa.gov/system/files/documents/2025-10/fy\\_2026\\_epa\\_general\\_terms\\_and\\_conditions\\_effective\\_october\\_1\\_2025\\_or\\_later.pdf](https://www.epa.gov/system/files/documents/2025-10/fy_2026_epa_general_terms_and_conditions_effective_october_1_2025_or_later.pdf)

## Use of Funds

CPGP funding may be used for typical project costs, including salaries, fringe benefits, contractual support, equipment, supplies, travel, and indirect costs. All grant payments will be made on a reimbursement basis except as described in [Section 7](#). Working Capital Advance of this RFA, and [Section 6](#), which describes ineligible uses of funds.

### Indirect Costs

For organizations without a federal negotiated indirect cost rate agreement (NICRA), indirect costs may be reimbursed at a rate up to 15% of the modified total direct costs. For organizations with a current NICRA approved by any federal agency, indirect costs may be reimbursed according to the NICRA formula. [Appendix 5](#) explains the calculation of indirect costs for GLRCGP.

### Tools & Equipment

Equipment (durable goods with a unit cost of \$5,000 or more) is generally not an eligible cost under this design and engineering opportunity. Any equipment costs must be directly necessary to accomplish project objectives and require prior written approval from Alliance.

### SUPPLIES

Consumable items and materials with a unit cost under \$5,000 that are directly necessary to complete the funded work are allowable costs."

### Travel

Applicants are encouraged to budget for travel to share lessons and results of projects with regional and national practitioners aligned with CPGP-funded projects. Sub-awardees should plan to attend 2 CPGP Annual Learning Exchange meetings, held within the region. Travel expenses to share knowledge at other meetings may also be allowable. All travel-related costs should be included in proposal budgets, including airfare, lodging, registration fees, ground transportation, and any other associated travel expenses.

## Ineligible Uses of Funding

CPGP may not be used for certain purposes under this solicitation. However, CPGP can fund eligible components of a larger project that may include ineligible components funded by other means.

The following uses of funding are ineligible for CPGP26:

- **Research and Monitoring:** CPGP26 will not fund proposals whose primary purpose is research, monitoring, or planning; however, these activities may be supported as components of a larger project when their purpose is to assess or demonstrate the outcomes and impacts of the grant-funded work. Applicants should clearly describe the role of such activities as well as how they inform the achievement of GLRI metrics and project goals.
- **Actions Legally Required:** CPGP26 will not fund actions required to settle a formal enforcement action or included in a court order; nor will it fund actions required as mitigation measures under a state, local, or federal permit for a specific project.
- **Routine Maintenance:** CPGP26 will not fund work involving only routine activities to maintain stormwater infrastructure, other facilities, land, or waterbodies.
- **Conventional “gray infrastructure” projects:** CPGP26 will not fund conventional infrastructure projects (e.g., installation of sewer lines).
- **Private Construction:** CPGP26 will not fund new construction or retrofitting of buildings or facilities serving primarily private purposes, including residential, commercial, and institutional properties.
- **Land Purchase:** Purchase of land or real estate will not be funded.
- **Lobbying:** CPGP26 will not fund proposals that involve any attempts to influence the outcomes of any Federal, state, or local election, referendum, initiative, or similar procedure, through in-kind or cash contributions, endorsements, publicity, or similar activity.
- **Applications Focused Solely on Improving Access and Recreational Activities:** Proposals that only seek to enhance public access or recreational opportunities without a broader environmental benefit will not be funded.
- **Applications Focused Solely on Workforce Development Activities:** Standalone workforce development initiatives without a direct connection to GLRI measures mentioned in Section 4. Funding Priorities will not be eligible for funding.
- **Applications Focused Solely on Environmental Education.** Standalone education programs will not be eligible for funding.
- **Activities Occurring Outside the Southern Lake Michigan Basin eligible project boundaries:** Eligible activities must take place within the eligible project boundaries in the Southern Lake Michigan basin in Illinois and Indiana. Please use this interactive map to assess whether your proposed project is within the eligible area: [Interactive Map of the Southern Lake Michigan Community Partnerships Grants Program](#). Activities occurring outside this defined geographic region will not be funded.
- **Activities to Evaluate or Achieve Management Actions in Great Lakes Areas of Concern:** Proposals that are solely focused on evaluating or achieving management actions within designated Great Lakes Areas of Concern will not be funded.

## Working Capital Advance

An obstacle to participation in many federal programs is the inability of the applicant to finance the first phase of activities. To reduce this obstacle, Alliance for the Great Lakes (Alliance) has worked with the EPA to provide Working Capital Advances. In the LOI and Full Proposal, applicants have the option to request a Working Capital Advance. Working Capital Advance can cover initial expenses, enabling the applicant to complete the initial project activities and objectives effectively without an undue strain on the applicant's cash. The Working Capital Advance will also enable the applicant to be in an improved financial position to handle a cost reimbursement payment method for the remainder of disbursements. The Working Capital Advance will only cover the first two months upon starting the project. Applicants for a working capital advance must provide detailed documentation of expenditure at the end of the two months. If funds from the two-month budget are not spent, the subrecipient will inform Alliance why the funds were not spent, and Alliance will determine if the funds need to be returned or spent on another part of the project. Reimbursable costs are costs in the approved subgrant agreement budget and follow the cost principles of the 2 CFR Part 200, Uniform Guidance. Disbursements are subject to funding availability and obligations under the agreement between the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Alliance. Request for Working Capital Advance will have no impact on the scoring of the application.

## Additional Resources

The CPGP26 Page: [Community Partnerships Grant Program ~ Alliance for the Great Lakes](#) is the primary online resource and portal for prospective CPGP26 applicants.

Examples of projects based on GLRI themes and implementation actions can be found here:  
[Project Case Studies](#) [Projects Great Lakes Restoration Initiative](#)

Best Practices Guide for Procurements under EPA Assistance Agreements -  
<https://www.epa.gov/grants/best-practice-guide-procuring-services-supplies-and-equipment-under-epa-assistance>

Budget Dev. Guidance for Applicants / Recipients of EPA Financial Assistance -  
<https://www.epa.gov/grants/rain-2019-g02-r2>

For questions about this RFA, contact Ashley Brummel,  
[CommunityPartnershipsGrant@greatlakes.org](mailto:CommunityPartnershipsGrant@greatlakes.org). For additional assistance, schedule an appointment at: [calendly](#).

***Thanks for your interest in the Community Partnership Grant Program.  
We look forward to receiving your Letter of Intent!***

## Appendices

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## Appendix #2

### Letters of Intent

#### HOW TO SUBMIT A LETTER OF INTENT

Good Grant will serve as the official applicant portal. Applications should be submitted via this portal. Go to the [Log in | Alliance for the Great Lakes](#) and follow the links to the online application. When you submit your application, you will receive a confirmation of receipt. Save or print the reply for your records.

Applications as well as supporting documents requested can be submitted through the portal in Word or PDF format, and the budget template should be submitted in Excel. If applicants are unable to use the portal please reach out to Ashley Brummel at [CommunityPartnershipsGrant@greatlakes.org](mailto:CommunityPartnershipsGrant@greatlakes.org) to discuss an alternative submission process.

If you do not receive confirmation of receipt by the end of the first business day following the deadline, you must contact Ashley Brummel at [CommunityPartnershipsGrant@greatlakes.org](mailto:CommunityPartnershipsGrant@greatlakes.org) as soon as possible to ensure acceptance of your application. All applications must meet the deadlines listed above and must be completed at the time of submittal.

In the event of documented transmittal problems, corrupted files, or other technical issues, Alliance, at its discretion, will make every effort to accept applications that were submitted correctly but not received due to problems beyond the applicant's control. However, to minimize the risk that a proposal cannot be accepted, we encourage applicants to submit proposals with sufficient time to address these kinds of problems before the deadlines. LOIs that omit required elements or that do not adhere to specified character limits will not be accepted or evaluated. Alliance reserves the right to accept or reject any proposal on the basis of its sole determination that the proposal meets, or does not meet, program goals, objectives, and requirements. Alliance may request additional information from applicants prior to inviting Full Proposals.

Letters of Intent (LOIs) allow Alliance to provide a preliminary review of project ideas, in order to determine whether a full proposal will be requested and to provide comments to applicants. The LOI must be submitted via the [online portal](#). LOIs will be accepted with a deadline for submittal by **September 11, 2026**. The following provides a guide to the content of the LOI that must be submitted via the online portal.

## LETTER OF INTENT, APPLICATION QUESTIONS

### ***Section 1: Names of Applicant, Partner(s), and Landowner***

1. Applicant: Name, organization, email, phone
2. Role of the Applicant
3. Applicant Point of Contact: Name, organization, email, phone
4. Project Leader and Manager: Name, organization, email, phone
5. Quality Assurance Manager: Name, organization, email, phone
6. Name of the community organization and its role:
7. Name of landowner:
8. Confirmation of land protection agreement w/landowner:

### ***Section 2: Organizational Fiscal Information***

1. Employer Identification Number (EIN)
2. Federal System Award Management (SAM) registration status and current expiration date. A SAM account can be created at no cost at [sam.gov](http://sam.gov).
3. Applicant organization Unique Entity ID (UEI). The UEI will be automatically generated by your SAM account
  - A. Note: EIN SAM information and UEI are not required for submitting the LOI, but are required for the Full Proposal. Applicants can note that these items are “pending” when submitting the LOI. As it may take several weeks to complete these registrations, be sure to allow sufficient time to obtain them prior to the Full Proposal deadline
4. Organizational Budget – The total dollar amount of the organization’s annual budget for the most recently completed fiscal year.

### ***Section 3: Overview of Project, Applicant Organization, and Partner Information***

1. (200 words or less) Provide a brief description of the project, include a compelling description of the need and value of the project, the community partners who are helping lead and guide the project, and what will be achieved through this project. (bulleted list is fine).
2. (200 words or less) Provide a brief description of the applicant's mission, history, current programs, and accomplishments. Describe prior experience managing design and engineering projects, partners, and contractors. (bulleted list is fine)
3. (200 words or less) A goal of this funding program is to build the capacity of organizations who have never before received federal funding so they can successfully manage federal funds now and into the future. Identify whether the applicant or one of the named project partners have never before received EPA, GLRI, or other federal funds before, and describe what actions will be taken through this project to build the capacity of the applicant or their named partners.

4. (200 words or less) Clearly articulate each partner organization's role, including roles related to project management, design and engineering, permitting process, community and agency engagement, and capacity building. Name the person who will assume the role of quality assurance manager and will be responsible for tracking and reporting on compliance with all federal rules and regulations. Include whether the applicant and/or partners have received EPA, GLRI or other federal funds before, and outline the applicant's capacity and experience related to managing federal funding, assuring quality management of environmental data/information, and complying with all the necessary Federal Terms and Conditions and Program Specific Terms & Conditions. Note, a contractor could be hired as the quality assurance manager. Note that formal letters of support are not required for the LOI but will be required for final applications.

#### **Section 4: Project Location**

1. (Upload PDF) (100 words or less) Upload a Map of the General Location. A map or maps of the proposed project area is required for all proposals. Attach a single PDF file, standard letter size, 3 pages and 10 MB max. In addition, provide a brief description of where the proposed project is located within the eligible project boundaries, using an address, latitude/longitude, or other spatial information.
2. (300 words or less) The overarching goal of this grant program is to invest in GLRI projects where they are needed the most. To help the reviewers understand why your project is needed, briefly describe the importance of your project for the part of the watershed and community where it is located. Where possible, please reference data from existing plans, media, maps, or other sources. Consider these questions in your response: *Why does the community where the project is located need this investment? How will this project help this community? What other benefits (beyond those required by the GLRI program) will this project provide?*
3. (200 words or less) Describe how the project is designed to include a transferrable approach and how it will contribute to broader-scale implementation across a community, region, or watershed in the eligible project area and/or that demonstrate cost-effective approaches that result in larger environmental benefit compared to the total cost. Elaborate on any plans to increase the transferability of the approach and to engage key partners, community members, and stakeholders.

#### **Section 5: Project Readiness**

1. (400 words or less) Describe the phases of the project you have already completed and the steps you have already taken that demonstrate your readiness to advance final design and permitting for the project you are proposing. As an example, here is the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation's "project pipeline" from planning to implementation phases: 1) Community Capacity Building and Planning, 2) Site Assessment and Preliminary Design, 3) Final Design & Permitting, and 4) Project Implementation. Outline how you will, within 18 months, advance projects from conceptual or preliminary designs into 90% final designs and

engineering plans. Be sure to indicate whether the project is on private or public land and whether you have an existing agreement with the landowner. If an agreement with a private landowner has not yet been obtained, you must include the date by which you expect to have a signed agreement.

2. (100 words or less) Confirm whether you will collect or utilize environmental data, water-quality models, or similar tools and information for decision-making. For design grants, it is very likely that some sort of environmental data will be used. If so, identify who on the team will be responsible for developing the needed Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP). Contractors are okay to use as technical experts to assist with QAPP preparation.

### **Section 6: Budget and Budget Narrative**

1. (Using the template provided) Provide a budget that shows the distribution of funding between grant partners, subcontractors, and/or consultants.

#### **Budget Notes**

- A. Be sure to budget time and travel expenses related to attending 2 Annual Learning Events, 1 of which will be in the Chicagoland region, the other will be somewhere in the Great Lakes basin, with 1 overnight required.
- B. Quality Assurance Project Plans (QAPPs): Funded projects that collect or utilize environmental data, water-quality models, or similar tools and information for decision-making are required to develop a Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP). If your project requires a QAPP, be sure to include costs for developing the QAPP in your budget. More information on QAPPs is provided in Appendix 4, or contact Alliance for the Great Lakes for assistance.
- C. There is no matching funds requirement.
- D. If the project includes Optional Outcomes related to capacity building, ensure that the budget shows the distribution of funding needed to advance these optional outcomes, and show that they do not exceed 25% of the total budget.

### **Section 7: Project Outcomes**

#### **REQUIRED - GLRI Outcomes and Measures of Progress**

1. (Choose from the drop-down menu, click on all that apply) Select at least one GLRI Outcome and related Measure of Progress that your proposed project will achieve once the plan is implemented. Proposed design and engineering projects are not expected to achieve immediate environmental or conservation outcomes by the end of the 18-month grant period. However, successful proposals will demonstrate that the design and engineering planning project, when implemented, will address at least one of the GLRI priority outcomes and at least one related MOP listed below.

- **Invasive Species Control**

- MOP: Acres where activities have been conducted to control aquatic/terrestrial invasive species.

- **Non-point source runoff reduction**
  - MOP: Estimated gallons of untreated stormwater runoff captured or treated. Consider using EPA Stormwater Calculator Tool, <https://www.epa.gov/water-research/national-stormwater-calculator>
- **Restoration of Great Lakes shoreline and riparian corridors**
  - MOP: Miles of Great Lakes shoreline and riparian corridors restored or protected.
- **Habitat restore/enhance/protect**
  - MOP: Acres of coastal wetland, nearshore, and other habitats restored, protected, or enhanced.

### **OPTIONAL - Recipient Support and Community Benefits Outcomes and Measures of Progress**

1. (Choose from the drop-down menu, click on all that apply) Applicants are encouraged to identify one or more optional Recipient Support and Community Benefits outcomes and MOP (see list below). If identifying optional outcome(s) and MOP, applicants must explain at the Full Proposal stage how their project will be more successful if one or more of the capacity building MOPs below are included as complement to their proposed final design and permitting project. Projects focused solely on community capacity building outcomes and measures of progress will not be considered. Applicants will be awarded more points if they include optional outcomes and MOPs, especially if the applicant or one of their partners has never before received GLRI or federal funding. Projects including optional MOPs can allocate up to 25% of the total project budget for the execution of those MOPs.
  - **Stakeholder Engagement and Community Benefits**
    - The number of municipalities, local, state, federal government entities, and community-based organizations participating in the project
    - The number of people engaged in a workforce development activity
    - Number of representatives engaged from the community where the proposed project is located
    - Number of families and/or high school age youth engaged in implementation and/or stewardship of the GLRI project
  - **Financial and Project Management Capacity Building**
    - Submission of financial management strategy and/or project management workplan for the proposed GLRI project
  - **Project Implementation and Long-Term Maintenance**
    - MOP (non-numeric): Documentation that demonstrates project implementation readiness (e.g. long-term monitoring, workplan, and site maintenance plan) is completed.
    - MOP: Number of implementation funding opportunities identified, including a descriptive list of identified opportunities.

### **Section 8: Certification**

- Signature of the responsible individual (name, job title, organization)

## **Appendix #3**

### **Full Proposals**

As described in the RFA, Alliance for the Great Lakes (Alliance) will review all applicants' LOIs and select those that will be further considered for funding. These applicants will be invited to submit a Full Proposal. Full Proposals will be accepted by invitation only and must be submitted via Good Grants an online portal provided to selected applicants.

The Full Proposal follows a format similar to the Letter of Intent (LOI) but allows for a more comprehensive presentation of the project. It provides an opportunity to expand on the project description, answer key questions in greater detail, and present the final budget.

Additionally, the Full Proposal should include a timeline and milestones, outlining key phases of the project, deliverables, and expected completion dates. This timeline should clearly define major tasks, deadlines, and progress checkpoints to ensure accountability and successful project execution.

Applicants must identify expected project results based on established Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) performance metrics as part of the Full Proposal. GLRI performance metrics, referred to as measures of progress (MOPs), are defined in the official GLRI Action Plan IV Measures Reporting Plan. This plan establishes standardized output and outcome indicators that EPA will use to track and report progress toward GLRI goals. These measures are tied to long-term environmental and community outcomes and focus on quantifiable outputs.

Applicants should:

- Review the GLRI performance measures in the GLRI Action Plan IV Measures Reporting Plan. The plan provides definitions, units of measure, acceptable results, and reporting guidance for each measure.
- Select the most relevant measures that align with their proposed project activities and expected results.
- Quantify expected outputs and/or outcomes in their project impact model using the selected GLRI measures.
- Reference the GLRI measures they are using by measure name and code, and describe how their project will contribute to those results.

Official reference for measures:

[GLRI Action Plan IV Measures Reporting Plan \(PDF, January 13, 2026\):](#)

Additional background on the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative and its priorities can be found on the [EPA's GLRI program page](#).

Alliance may request that the applicant make changes to the proposal as described in the LOI in order to submit a Full Proposal. In other cases, the proposal may evolve as more information becomes available. The scope and budget of a Full Proposal need not be identical to that described in the LOI, but should be substantially similar. Alliance will provide complete information for submitting a Full Proposal to selected applicants.

## Appendix #4

### Decisions

LOIs and Full Proposals will be reviewed by the CPGP Review Committee, an independent advisory committee of individuals with expertise in environmental management, ecological restoration, and community development. Alliance will consult with the Review Committee and EPA prior to selecting LOIs for further consideration or Full Proposals for funding. Following initial decisions, Alliance may request additional information from applicants or request changes to project scope and budget, prior to approving the next step.

Following the review of LOIs, Alliance will invite Full Proposals from applicants whose proposals have been selected for further consideration and will notify applicants whose LOIs have not been selected. Feedback on LOIs will be provided to applicants, upon request, who are invited to submit full proposals.

Following the review of Full Proposals, Alliance will notify applicants whether they have been selected for a full award, partial award or not selected. Awards are not final until grant agreements have been executed.

### EVALUATION CRITERIA

#### LOI Pre-Requisites

Pre-requisites are assessed first. If applicants are found not to have sufficiently met the pre-requisites criteria, they will be contacted and given 24 hours to correct, and if the response is not sufficient then the application does not move forward in the LOI evaluation process.

### ***Organizational Capacity and Partner Roles***

Eligible organizations demonstrate that they have existing (already hired) staff identified as the project manager and lead contact, and their capacity to manage federal funding and comply with all the necessary rules and regulations. Roles for the applicant and their partners, related to advancing required and optional outcomes and measure of progress, are clearly articulated.

### ***Community Need and Aligned Outcomes***

The proposed project is located in the eligible project area. Applicant makes a reasoned case that the project is located in a community where GLRI projects are needed most. The project clearly advances the required GLRI outcomes and one or more required GLRI measures of progress.

### ***Readiness***

Applicant has the ability to complete 90% design and permitting within 18 months, has an existing agreement or commitment with the landowner, and confirms whether or not they need a Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP) and if so has identified who on the team is responsible for developing and managing the QAPP.

### ***Budget and Financial Information***

The applicant's budget demonstrates a reasonable allocation of costs based on proposed deliverables. Partners roles are clear and fully compensated for their time and expertise. If the applicant has included optional capacity building outcomes and measures of progress, their budget clearly identifies how much achieving those will cost, and those costs do not exceed 25% of the total project budget. Applicants have a solid past and current financial capacity, including their capacity to manage federal grant funds and ensure the feasibility and success of the proposed work. Their budget aligns with EPA cost principles.

## **FULL PROPOSAL PRE-REQUISITES**

Pre-requisites are assessed first. If applicants are found not to have sufficiently met the pre-requisites criteria, they will be contacted and given 24 hours to correct, and if the response is not sufficient, then the application does not move forward in the Full Proposal evaluation process.

### ***Organizational Capacity and Partner Roles***

Applicant provides the written agreement with the landowner; uploads the necessary organizational status confirmation, and if the applicant has identified optional capacity building outcomes and measures of success, they provide additional details about their plan to increase the capacity of their partners, especially if these partners have never received GLRI funding or other types of federal funding before.

### ***Budget and Financial Information***

The applicant's budget demonstrates a reasonable allocation of costs based on proposed deliverables. Partners roles are clear and fully compensated for their time and expertise. If the applicant has included optional capacity building outcomes and measures of progress, their budget clearly identifies how much achieving those will cost, and those costs do not exceed 25% of the total project budget. Applicants have a solid past and current financial capacity, including their capacity to manage federal grant funds and ensure the feasibility and success of the proposed work. Their budget aligns with EPA cost principles. Applicants provide their: Employer Identification Numbers, Federal System Award Management registration status and current expiration date, application organization unique entity ID (UEI).

Once pre-requisites are met applicants will be evaluated based on:

- **Project Value and Impact:** Did the applicant provide: 1) a compelling description of the project that describes the need and value of a GLRI project for this community, 2) who the community partners and the process by which they are helping lead and guide the project, 3) why community partnership is necessary for durational success of the project, and 4) what will be achieved through this project.
- **Organizational Capacity and Partner Roles:** An eligible organization that has existing (already hired) staff identified as the project manager and lead contact, and that demonstrates their capacity to manage federal funding and comply with all the necessary rules and regulations. Roles for the applicant and partners, related to advancing required and optional outcomes, are clearly articulated. If the applicant and one of the partners is identified as having never received EPA, GLRI or other federal funding, the applicant has identified optional capacity building outcomes to support durational project success. Applicant can provide a written agreement, with the landowner that allows the project to take place and ensures the project will be conserved, or if no existing written agreement exists, a Letter of Commitment that includes a date by which a written agreement will be secured.
- **Community Need and Aligned Outcomes:** The Project is located in the eligible project boundaries in the Southern Lake Michigan basin and in a community where GLRI projects are needed most. The project clearly advances the required GLRI outcomes and at least one required GLRI measure of progress. Applicant proposes a creative approach to addressing community need through design and implementation of GLIR projects. Applicant identifies and advances optional capacity building outcomes and related measures of progress needed to ensure durational success. Applicant identifies how the project will support broader scale implementation across the community, region, or watershed and describes the transferability of the approach.
- **Readiness:** Applicant can complete 90% design and permitting within 18 months, an existing agreement or commitment with the landowner, and knows if they need a Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP) and who on the team is responsible for developing it. Applicant submits existing plans, site assessments, and preliminary design work that demonstrates progression from concept/preliminary to final design and readiness. Submits a work plan that includes the

key milestones and process they will take to advance final design, permitting, etc. Applicant is able to describe how they will achieve durational success, after the grant ends.

- **Budget and Financial Justification:** Cost-effectiveness and fiscal responsibilities. Partner role clarity, including funding for Optional Capacity Building Outcomes. Applicants' past fiscal performance and capacity to manage grant funds and ensure the feasibility and success of the proposed work. Aligns with EPA cost principles.

All applicants will receive feedback on their LOI or Full Proposal application upon request. While Alliance works closely with the advisory committee and EPA in evaluating applications, final selection and funding decisions will be made at the sole discretion of Alliance.

## Appendix #5

### Requirements of Funded Projects

**\*\*This information is only relevant to applicants once their final application has been accepted.**

#### Reporting Requirements

Grantees must submit quarterly progress reports as well as a final report. Report requirements include cost tracking, programmatic reporting, and tracking of performance metrics. Alliance for the Great Lakes (Alliance) will provide grantees with the format of interim and final reports upon award. Information in grantee reports will be used by Alliance and EPA in public communication materials and performance reports.

#### Procurement Requirements

The source of CPGP is federal funding. Therefore, funded projects must adhere to federal requirements regarding contracting, sub-awards, and purchases. These include multiple bids for procurements above \$10,000 (2 C.F.R. 200), good-faith efforts to employ Disadvantaged Business Enterprises (40 C.F.R. 33.301). For more information on budget categories and procurement requirements associated with this funding, applicants should refer to:

**Best Practice Guide for Procuring Services, Supplies, and Equipment Under EPA Assistance Agreements** online at: <https://www.epa.gov/sites/default/files/2021-03/documents/best-practice-guide-for-procuring-services-supplies-equipment.pdf>

#### AWARD ANNOUNCEMENTS

Grants will be announced at one or two public events (in-person or virtual) in April 2027. Grantees are expected to participate in at least one of these events.

## Collaboration

Grantees will be encouraged to participate in 2 Annual Learning Exchange meetings during the period of the award, to be held within the Southern Lake Michigan region or online. Travel funds for these meetings may be included in proposal budgets. Grantees may be offered the opportunity to participate in other regional CPGP events outside of the Southern Lake Michigan basins aimed at sharing progress and results with organizations throughout the region, including CPGP meetings and workshops.

## Sharing of Data & Results

Grantees are required to make project data (including monitoring and modeling data), results, and other project information publicly available and readily shareable within one year of project completion. Should this present a problem with proprietary or personal information, contact Alliance to discuss it in advance of the application. Additionally, applicants are expected to share project information and results at the collaboration and technology transfer meetings described above.

## Audits

Applicants with independent audits or audited financial statements must make them available to Alliance within one month of receipt. Alliance conducts periodic on-site audits of financial records and programmatic progress of all grantees.

## Reimbursement

Reimbursement requests shall be submitted at least quarterly and at most monthly. As noted elsewhere, applicants must begin incurring costs against the grant within the first reporting period following the award.

**Other Federal Cost Requirements:** Costs under this grant must be reasonable, allowable, allocable, and necessary to the supported project in accordance with 2 CFR Part 200, Subpart E, and must adhere to the general procurement standards set forth in 2 CFR 200.318 and the “Consultant Fee Cap” set forth in 2 CFR 1500.9.

For guidance on these requirements, applicants should refer to the General Budget Development Guidance for Applicants/Recipients of EPA Financial Assistance, which explains the reasonable, allowable, allocable, and necessary cost requirements (page 2) and procurement standards (page 23): <https://www.epa.gov/grants/rain-2019-g02-r2>

## Quality Assurance Project Plans (QAPPs)

All projects selected for funding by CPGP will undergo a Quality Assurance (QA) review by EPA and may require an EPA-approved Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP) prior to starting project

activities. This includes projects that collect or utilize environmental data (including use of secondary data), water-quality models, or similar tools and information for decision-making. This also includes habitat restoration projects or green infrastructure installations where soil is moved. Alliance will recommend a preferred provider of QAPPs to grantees who don't have a provider. Draft QAPPs must be submitted for review no more than 60 days prior to beginning project work that triggers a need for a QAPP, such as data collection, data use, or to provide sufficient time for review. Grant recipients are responsible for the development of an approved QAPP and must identify within the proposal how they plan to complete the QAPP (for example, through contractual support or in-house). Projects determined to need a QAPP must have a fully-approved QAPP within the first year of the award and, again, no more than 60 days prior to the start of project components which collect or utilize environmental data. Alliance will assist grantees in coordinating QAPP submittals to EPA.

Applicants can learn more about QAPP requirements at:

<https://www.epa.gov/great-lakes-funding/glnpos-quality-assurance-resources-site-granteessupporting-great-lakes>

<https://www.epa.gov/quality/epa-qar-5-epa-requirements-quality-assurance-project-plans>

Applicants unfamiliar with the QAPP development and approval process may contact Alliance for assistance in QAPP planning prior to proposal submittal. Please note that EPA's QA review will provide instructions for the type of QAPP and level of information needed for individual projects.

## Appendix #6

### Budget

One of the LOI application questions will ask for a budget. Applicants will be provided with and are encouraged to use the [Budget Template](#) to create their budgets. Sign up for Office Hours or contact Ashley Brummel at [CommunityPartnershipsGrant@greatlakes.org](mailto:CommunityPartnershipsGrant@greatlakes.org) for additional assistance.

### Budget Narrative

One of the Full Proposal questions will ask for a budget narrative. Applicants will be provided with and are encouraged to use the [Budget Narrative Sample](#) provided.

## Appendix #7

### Key Federal Grant Citations

- 2 CFR 200.403 – Factors affecting allowability of costs
- 2 CFR 200.404 – Reasonable costs
- 2 CFR 200.405 – Allocable costs
- 2 CFR 200.439 – Equipment and other capital expenditures
- 2 CFR 200.459 – Professional service costs
- EPA Assistance Agreement Policy, 2 CFR Part 1500
- <https://www.epa.gov/grants/grant-terms-and-conditions#general>

## Appendix #8

### QAPP/QMP Requirement Checklist

Funded subrecipients must use the QAPP Decision Checklist and Timeline below to determine whether a Quality Assurance Project Plan and/or Quality Management Plan is required and to follow the applicable development timeline. You will be asked to make an initial copy of the document for editing.

### Community Partnerships Grant Program (CPGP)

### Thanks for your interest in CPGP26