

# Lake Erie Protection Fund – Small Grants

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Eligibility and General Overview

1. Who can apply for funding through the Lake Erie Protection Fund?
  - To be eligible for funding, your organization must be a non-profit, 501(c)3 organization, or a unit of government (local, state, or federal). LEPF grants are commonly awarded to watershed groups, federal agencies, colleges and universities, local community groups, and others doing work to benefit Lake Erie or its watershed.
2. Do I need to be located in the Lake Erie watershed to apply for funding?
  - No. However, the work completed must directly benefit the Lake Erie basin. If work is completed outside the basin, it is generally done in a lab setting using samples from within the basin, or on sites that are being used for the calibration of techniques because of prior data collection. In either case, the majority of the project is completed within the watershed, or on samples from the watershed.
3. Can I do work outside of the Lake Erie watershed with LEPF funds?
  - Yes. However, this work must be part of a larger project goal that provides a direct benefit to Lake Erie. The physical location of your organization is not a factor in the funding of projects.
4. What types of projects are typically funded?
  - The LEPF funds a wide variety of projects, from research to implementation. Each year, the LEPF provides funding for small grants and for special targeted projects. It is recommended that you read the current RFP carefully to determine which projects are most likely to be funded in any given year. If you have a question about a project, contact the Lake Erie Commission Office to discuss your proposal.
5. I have a project idea, who should I talk to about it?
  - The Lake Erie Commission Office employs a Grants Manager. You can reach this staff member at 419-245-2514 or lakeeriecommission@ameritech.net
6. When is the next LEPF due date?
  - LEPF due dates are generally once a quarter, 6 weeks prior to the next scheduled Commission meeting. It is recommended that you consult the online RFP for the next due date.
7. Where can I get a copy of the LEPF application?
  - The LEPF application is online at <http://lakeerie.ohio.gov/LakeErieProtectionFund.aspx>.

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### Proposal Development

1. What level of funding can we request?
  - Small grants are available for up to \$15,000. Targeted priority project funding levels vary with each RFP issued.
2. How much match do we need to show?
  - A minimum match of 25% of the funding requested is required (\$2,500 for a \$10,000 project) for small grants. Match for targeted priority projects will be announced as a part of the RFP each year.
3. What is an acceptable source of match?
  - Almost any source of funds or in-kind services can be counted as match, including federal funding.
4. What is an agency advisor and how do I get in touch with the correct person?
  - An agency advisory is a state agency staff person from one of the 23 cabinet level agencies who works with the grantee to ensure the project addresses resource management issues to the greatest degree possible. A priority of the LEPF is to improve the quality of management decisions made by state agencies. Incorporating state staff into your project ensures that the impact of your project continues beyond what can be funded through the LEPF.
5. Who are the 23 cabinet level agencies?
  - The 23 executive agencies are listed online at <http://www.governor.ohio.gov/Cabinet/tabid/117/Default.aspx>. Your project's Agency Advisor must be employed by one of these agencies.
6. Can I come to your office to review past applications?
  - Past applications are kept on file at the Commission's office in Toledo. PDF scans of recent applications can also be sent to you via email if requested.
7. What is the timeline for the review process and for projects?
  - Applications are typically due 6 weeks prior to the quarterly Commission meeting. Applications are reviewed by a Grants Committee, executive committee, and the Commission prior to approval. Generally, grant projects should be 1 year in scope. The developed contracts usually allow an additional three months (15 months total) for start-up and close-out paperwork.

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8. There isn't enough space for the information I want to provide on the application, how can I fix this?
  - The application form is locked to allow a set amount of space for each response requested. All responses must fit into this space. No alterations to the form are allowed.
9. Can I include attachments with my application?
  - Draft agendas for conferences or workshops that are part of a project and maps are allowed as attachments. Do not include cover letters or letters of support. They will be discarded and will not be forwarded to the Grants Committee.
10. When is the application due?
  - Applications are due to the Commission Office by 4:30pm on the due date.
11. Why can't I save my application on the form?
  - The application cannot be saved online in its PDF format. It is recommended that you consider using another word processing program to save the text you provide in the application form.
12. Can state employees request wages through an LEPF project?
  - No, the LEPF cannot be used to pay the salary of state agency employees.

### **Review Process**

1. Who reviews the applications?
  - Applications are reviewed by a Grants Committee consisting of representatives from each of the Commission agencies and Ohio Sea Grant. The Grants Committee makes a recommendation which is reviewed by the Executive Committee and Commission before it is approved for funding.
2. Can I contact the Grants Committee members directly to discuss my project?
  - You can, however it is recommended that you make your first contact to the Commission office. The Grants Manager can help direct your inquiry to the proper agency and division. This contact should be made during the project development phase, to request input, rather than after the project is submitted.

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3. When is the decision made?
  - The final decision on project funding is made at a quarterly Commission meeting. Commission meeting dates are posted online at <http://lakeerie.ohio.gov>.
4. Should I attend the Commission meeting where my application is reviewed?
  - It is not required, but all Commission meetings are open to the public, and the other topics and information discussed may be of interest or benefit to you.
5. When and how will I be notified of the funding decision?
  - You will be notified by email within two business days of the final decision. All award recipients will receive a contract by postal mail. Notification by mail should be expected within ten business days of the Commission meeting where the final decision was made.
6. My proposal was not funded, what do I do now?
  - If your project is not funded, you are welcome to contact the Commission office to discuss your application and the potential for resubmission. It is recommended that if you plan to resubmit a grant application, that you contact the Commission office prior to doing so.

#### **Project Start-Up**

1. My project was funded, what can I expect next?
  - You will receive notice via email within two business days. An agreement will be sent via postal mail within five business days.
2. I have not received a contract or other expected paperwork in the mail, who do I contact?
  - Contact the Commission office at 419-245-2514. Ask for the Grants Manager.
3. When will I receive the first payment?
  - The first payment should arrive approximately 4-6 weeks after the agreement is fully executed.
4. When can I start charging expenses to the project?
  - You can charge expenses to the LEPF once your agreement has been fully executed, that is, once both parties have signed the agreement. The grantee signs first, so the agreement is valid once the Commission has signed on.

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5. Why do I need to complete a W-9?
  - For fiscal purposes. The LEPF is managed by the Commission staff, but payments are processed by Ohio EPA. The W-9 is required to release the first payment.
6. Why do I need to complete the Ohio Department of Safety's Division of Homeland Security Pre-Certification Form?
  - All non-state entities which receive LEPF funding must complete this form prior to the first payment.

### **Interim Report**

1. When is my interim report due?
  - The grant agreement contains all reporting due dates. It is the grantees responsibility to ensure they meet all deadlines.
2. Where do I get the Interim Report form?
  - All grant forms, including the Interim Report form, can be found online at <http://lakeerie.ohio.gov/LakeErieProtectionFund.aspx>.
3. What happens if I am late with my interim report?
  - Timely reporting and the quality of reports impacts decisions regarding extension requests for current projects as well as funding decisions for future requests. It is recommended that grantees include all due dates on their calendar, and adhere to these dates.

### **Site Visit**

1. What is a site visit?
  - A site visit is a short meeting between a representative of the Commission staff and the grantee to discuss the project in person. Generally, the Agency Advisor will also take part in the site visit. A visit will last 1-3 hours, and will include a discussion of the project to date, as well as the direction of the project through the final report.

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2. When should I expect a site visit?

- A site visit usually occurs 1-3 months after the interim report is filed. However, the visit may also occur at other times, depending on the project's schedule.

#### **Project Revision/Extension**

1. How do I request a project revision or deadline extension?

- A revision or deadline extension should be requested using the form online at <http://lakeerie.ohio.gov/LakeErieProtectionFund.aspx>

2. When do I request a project revision or extension?

- A revision or extension must be requested at least one month before the end of the project. A revision should be requested as soon as the need arises.

#### **Final Report**

1. When is my final report due?

- All due dates are listed in the grant agreement. Please retain a copy of this document and refer to it for due dates and project requirements. If you need a copy, please contact the Grants Manager.

2. What should my final report contain?

- Your final report will depend heavily on the type of project you completed. General guidelines are available on the Commission's website. If you have questions or concerns, please contact the Commission office for advice.

3. How will I know when the final report has been approved?

- The Grants Manager will send the grantee a letter once the final report has been approved.

4. What will happen to my final report?

- The final report will be placed online on the Commission's website to make it easily accessible to the public. The final abstract will be distributed to the Commission agencies and beyond as applicable.

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- Do I need to give credit to the LEPF for funding my project?
  - Yes. The grant agreement requires that you give the LEPF credit in all publications and materials designed or produced using grant dollars. Suggested language for recognizing the LEPF is available in the final report guidance online at <http://lakeerie.ohio.gov/LakeErieProtectionFund.aspx>

### General Questions

- Why aren't there more projects funded in my area?
  - LEPF projects are funded across the entire Lake Erie basin within Ohio. The distribution of projects is more likely due to the number of applications received focusing on a given area, rather than on the decision making process implemented by the Commission.
- Where is the Lake Erie watershed boundary?
  - A map has been provided below. (web link - [www.dnr.state.oh.us/Portals/13/science/pdf/eriewatersheds.pdf](http://www.dnr.state.oh.us/Portals/13/science/pdf/eriewatersheds.pdf)).

