

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, recipients must be based in the United States.
3. Can I do work outside of the Lake Erie watershed with LEPF funds?
 - A project where the majority of the work is done outside the watershed is not likely to be competitive in a grant cycle. It is possible, but this work must be part of a larger project goal that provides a direct benefit to Lake Erie. 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. In any case, it is best if the majority of the project is completed within the watershed, or on samples from the watershed.
4. What types of projects are typically funded?
 - The LEPF funds a wide variety of projects, from research to implementation. Projects must respond to a priority objective in the Lake Erie Protection and Restoration Plan (see web links to current plan). If you are responding to an RFP, it is recommended that you read the current RFP carefully to determine which projects are most likely to be funded in any given year. We recommend that prospective grantees contact Ohio Lake Erie Commission staff to discuss your proposal, especially if you have not previously applied for one of our grants.
5. Can the LEPF provide state employee wages through an LEPF project?
 - No, the LEPF cannot be used to pay the salary of state agency employees.
6. I have a project idea, who should I talk to about it?
 - Please contact Ohio Lake Erie Commission staff at 614-506-0619 or lakeericommission@lakeerie.ohio.gov.
7. When is the next LEPF due date?
 - LEPF due dates are generally 6 weeks prior to the next scheduled Commission meeting where grants will be awarded. These dates vary, so please consult the online RFP at <http://lakeerie.ohio.gov/LakeErieProtectionFund.aspx> for the next due date.

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8. Where can I get a copy of the LEPF application?

- The LEPF application is online at <http://lakeerie.ohio.gov/LakeErieProtectionFund.aspx>.

Proposal Development

1. What level of funding can we request?

- Grants up to \$50,000 are being accepted. On occasion larger grants are available, these are typically announced through the Great Lakes Information Network with more information posted at <http://lakeerie.ohio.gov/LakeErieProtectionFund.aspx>.

2. How much match do we need to show?

- A minimum match is not required. However, providing matching funds will make an application more competitive.

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. Generally speaking, if match funds are acceptable for a federal program, it will be acceptable for LEPF. Please call staff at 614-506-0619 if you have a question about acceptable match.

4. Can I review past applications?

- PDF scans of recent successful applications can be sent to you via email if requested.

5. 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 recommendations are provided to the Executive Director 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.

6. There isn't enough space for the information I want to provide on the application, how can I fix this?

- We allow a set amount of space for each response requested on the application form. All responses must fit into this space. No alterations to the form are allowed. Please be concise, and use references if applicable for detailed methodologies.

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7. Can I include attachments with my application?
 - Project director resumes or CVs, 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, unless another entity will be providing resources. If a project partner who is not the applicant will be providing cash or in-kind match, we highly recommend you include a letter of commitment from that partner.
8. When is the application due?
 - Applications are due to the Commission Office by 5:00pm on the due date.
9. Why can't I save my application on the form?
 - The application cannot be saved online in its PDF format. Please download the form to fill it out, then print and save. It is recommended that you consider using another word processing program to save the text you provide in the application form. If you have difficulty with the application form, please contact staff for assistance.

Review Process

1. Who reviews the applications?
 - All applications are reviewed by the Grants Committee, which consists of designated employees from the Commission Agencies and Ohio Sea Grant. The recommendations are reviewed by the Executive Director and the Commission before a final funding decision is made by the Commission. Applications are reviewed based on:
 - Technical merits of the proposal;
 - Qualifications of the applicant to accomplish their stated objectives;
 - Degree to which the project addresses a Strategic Objective of the LEPR 20 or specific priority as established by the Commission;
 - Degree to which the project can leverage funding support (match) from other sources;
 - Degree to which the project may stimulate environmental and economic benefits to Ohio's portion of Lake Erie and its watershed;
 - Degree of coordination and collaboration between project director and State of Ohio agencies;
 - Cost effectiveness of the proposed budget;
 - Degree to which the results of the project will be disseminated to multiple audiences;
 - Degree to which the proposed activity reflects an innovative or creative approach to addressing Lake Erie issues; and
 - Timeliness of the project.

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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. Staff 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.
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 ten 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 614-506-0619.
3. When will I receive the first payment?
 - The first payment should arrive approximately 4-6 weeks after the agreement is fully executed.

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4. When can I start charging expenses to the project?
 - You can charge expenses to the LEPPF 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.
5. Why do I need to complete a W-9?
 - For fiscal purposes. The LEPPF is managed by the Commission staff, but payments are processed by Ohio EPA. The W-9 is required to release the first payment. This is part of the process of becoming certified by the state as a payee.
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 LEPPF funding must complete this form prior to the first payment. This is part of the process of becoming certified by the state as a payee.

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 an optional short meeting between Commission staff and the grantee to discuss the project in person. 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 Commission staff.

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 Commission staff 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

- Where is the Lake Erie watershed boundary?
 - A map has been provided below. (web link - <http://coastal.ohiodnr.gov/maps#lakeerie>).

