



Great Lakes Stewardship

2025 Application Guidance

Program Goal and Objective

The goal of the Great Lakes Fishery Trust's (GLFT) Great Lakes Stewardship grant category is to increase awareness and understanding of the ecology of the Great Lakes so residents can be advocates for strategies that support long-term sustainability of the Great Lakes fisheries and become stewards of the Great Lakes. In the 2025 strategic plan, the GLFT updated its priorities and schedule for Great Lakes Stewardship projects. Through this request for proposals (RFPs), the GLFT invites proposals focused on place-based stewardship education as detailed below. We intend to issue a second RFP later in 2025 requesting proposals to support fishing education. Please note the next Great Lakes Stewardship place-based education RFP is scheduled for release in 2027.

Eligible Activities for Funding

We are particularly interested in efforts that work to achieve the following outcomes:

- Increase people's understanding of the environment at the ecosystem or watershed level and promote taking action based on such understanding
- Promote environmental stewardship through direct experiences with natural resources

The trust will pursue its funding goal and outcomes through investments in:

Place-based stewardship education (PBSE): PBSE is a method of teaching and learning that extends the walls of the classroom into the local community and landscape through experiential, hands-on learning for studying natural, built, and social environments.

The trust will not fund the following stewardship projects:

- Projects that do not meet the Application Requirements listed below
- Development of new or modification of existing Great Lakes curricula, unless a strong case can be made for the need for said curricula
- Projects that do not align with the trust's investment priorities of PBSE in communities and preK–12.

This RFP process will be used for the disbursement of up to \$500,000 in grants in 2025. The GLFT funds projects that increase awareness and understanding of the ecology of the Great Lakes and encourage residents to become stewards of the Great Lakes. Applicants are encouraged to review the [GLFT's Policy on Great Lakes Stewardship Proposals](#) prior to submitting a proposal.

Applicants are also encouraged to review the GLFT's [Great Lakes Stewardship Program: Resource Document](#). This document aims to help potential applicants understand best practices developed through the GLFT's past PBSE investments in communities and preK–12 education. The sources of research literature identified in the resource document are supplementary and do not necessarily represent specific activities the GLFT will support.

Submission and Award Dates

Applications are due by **January 15, 2025**, at 5:00 PM EST. Funding decisions will be made by the GLFT Board of Trustees on March 11, 2025. Applicants will be notified of funding decisions by March 31, 2025. Grant awards will be available to successful applicants upon formal action by the board.

Applications must be submitted through the GLFT website (www.glft.org). The web-based application system will prompt you with mandatory questions and instructions to guide you through the application process.

To begin, visit our [Great Lakes Stewardship](#) page, where you will find Application Guidance documents and other useful information to help you complete an application.

Grant opportunities for which the GLFT is accepting applications can be viewed by clicking the [Browse Our Active Grant Opportunities](#) button, which will direct you to a page with online applications. Click on the title of the grant opportunity you are interested in and follow the instructions to apply.

If you already have a user account in our system, you will need to enter the email address and password you used to create your account to log in. If you do not know your password, click on [Forgot Your Password](#). Instructions to change your password will be sent to the email address associated with the user account.

If you do not have a user account in our system, click on [Create an Account](#), follow the instructions provided, and then proceed to the grant application.

If you need assistance with setting up your account, please contact GLFT staff at 517-371-7468 or glft@glft.org.

When Completing the Online Application

- Remember to save your work often.
- When uploading a document, click Save to complete the file transfer.
- You may leave your work and return at a later time to complete the application.
- **To return to an already started online application, log in and click on the Dashboard button, located in the upper right corner of the page. The Dashboard page provides access to your applications and/or active projects.**
- Make sure that your answers to each question are within the text field limits.
- Check each field before it is submitted.
- Be sure to answer all of the required questions. The system will not allow an application to be submitted if a required question is not answered.
- Be aware that no changes can be made to the application once it is submitted (if an error was made, contact GLFT staff).

Applicants are encouraged to log in to the site and review the application well in advance of the submission deadline. Late applications will not be accepted.

Application Assistance

Prospective applicants are encouraged to contact GLFT staff prior to submission of a grant proposal to discuss project goals and alignment with GLFT priorities. Staff are also available to assist applicants with navigating the online grant proposal submission process. Please contact Meagan O'Brien at 517-371-7468 or mobrien@glft.org to discuss a proposal.

Applicant Eligibility

Organizations eligible to apply for GLFT grants include nonprofit organizations with a 501(c)(3) designation from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) (or nongovernmental organizations holding charitable status in their country), as well as educational and governmental (including tribal) organizations.

Application Requirements

Applicants will be asked to submit the following information:

Applicant Information and History

Supply information about the applicant, including the name and email address of the project manager and the history of the organization's grant applications to the GLFT, including whether or not the organization has previously applied to the GLFT, has previously received funding from the GLFT, and has previously proposed this project to the GLFT. To reduce delays in the granting process in the event a proposal moves forward to an agreement with the GLFT, please provide the names and email addresses for an authorized agent and witness that will sign on behalf of your organization.

Grant Request

Supply information about this grant proposal, including the investment area, funding amount requested from the GLFT (as well as available matching funds), and the project start and end dates.

Project Summary

Briefly explain what the project proposes to accomplish using terminology appropriate to include on the GLFT website or in a press release to communicate project goals to a general audience. (Limit your response to 75 words.)

Project Narrative

Supply information about the proposed project. Note the word count limits for each response.

- 1. Project Goal(s).** Explain the goal(s) of the project and how this goal relates to the GLFT's Great Lakes Stewardship grant program priorities: to increase awareness and understanding of the ecology of the Great Lakes so residents can be advocates for strategies that support long-term sustainability of the Great Lakes fisheries and become stewards of the Great Lakes. (Limit your response to 500 words.)
- 2. Theory of Change.** The trust prioritizes meaningful, place-based environmental-stewardship experiences that will create active stewards of the Great Lakes. Explain how the project will influence behavior change and encourage participants to become active Great Lakes stewards. (Limit your response to 500 words.)
- 3. Project Need.** Describe the need for and significance of the project (Limit your response to 250 words.)
- 4. Communities Served.** Describe the population that the project will serve or attempt to reach. Funding priority will be given to projects that effectively reach a large number of people or will engage underserved communities and/or marginalized groups. Describe plans for providing these communities with direct access to natural resources, if applicable. Note how many people you anticipate the project will reach. (Limit your response to 500 words.)

5. ***Partnerships, Collaboration, and Relationship to Ongoing Activities.*** Provide information demonstrating that the proposed project will not duplicate ongoing activities in the region or activities funded by alternative sources. Projects that build upon or otherwise advance existing work and demonstrate support and engagement of key entities involved (e.g., the scientific community, organizations interested in the Great Lakes or its fisheries, and/or organizations focused on education) are encouraged. Describe the extent to which stakeholder groups such as local residents, educational institutions, nonprofits, and businesses will be involved in the proposed project. Projects should have a broad range of support from organizations and/or agencies interested in Great Lakes stewardship. For projects conducted in an area served by a Great Lakes Stewardship Initiative (GLSI) regional hub, identify if the hub is a project partner or involved in any way. For a list of GLSI hubs, visit www.greatlakesstewardship.org. (Limit your response to 500 words.)
6. ***Established Infrastructure.*** Describe how the project will utilize existing resources, materials, organizations, and systems that have already been established and are supported by long-term funding. If the project proposes to develop a new resource or approach, describe what new or persistent issue the new resource or approach will address, including engaging underserved communities and/or marginalized groups. (Limit your response to 250 words.)
7. ***Link to Michigan’s Education Reform Efforts.*** If the project is preK–12 education related, describe how the project is aligned with and contributes to Michigan’s educational priorities and processes, including content standards and standards for teacher professional development. If the project will engage preK–12 students during the school year through a link to a formal preK–12 program or informal education, describe how the work aligns with and supports the applicable Michigan academic standards. If the project proposes to engage preK–12 teachers, describe how the proposed work aligns with and supports documented best practices in professional development. (Limit your response to 250 words.)
8. ***Communicating Results.*** Describe plans for disseminating the results of the project to key/target audiences. Priority will be given to projects that include a sound plan for reaching key audiences with information about the outcomes of the project, including appropriate communication channels to reach target audiences. (Limit your response to 250 words.)
9. ***Evaluating Results.*** Describe the plan for evaluating the project’s results. Priority will be given to projects that include the implementation of a sound evaluation design and methods and will provide information or insights that will help guide future grant activities of the Great Lakes Fishery Trust. The evaluation plan should be clearly linked to the project’s goals and focus on outcomes and impacts. Successful evaluation often represents at least 10 percent of the direct costs of the budget. (Limit your response to 250 words.)
10. ***Sustainability Plan.*** Except for work that is of an obvious one-time nature, explain a clear plan for sustaining the effort beyond the ending date of the GLFT grant. Priority will be given to

projects that will likely continue beyond the GLFT’s investment. (Limit your response to 250 words.)

- 11. Cost Effectiveness.** Explain the project’s benefits relative to the GLFT investment requested. Priority will be given to projects that yield benefits commensurate with or greater than the GLFT’s investment. Benefits can be measured in various ways (e.g., number of participants who are meaningfully involved or the impact on the resource) depending upon the nature of the proposed work. (Limit your response to 500 words.)
- 12. Geographic Focus Area.** Describe the geographic impact area of the project. Priority will be given to projects focusing on Lake Michigan and its stewardship by Michigan residents. Some projects may involve residents of other Great Lakes states in addition to those living in Michigan. For those projects that involve residents of other Great Lakes states in addition to Michigan, the applicant must explain how the proposed effort will enhance stewardship throughout the Great Lakes basin, particularly Lake Michigan. (Limit your response to 250 words.)
- 13. Applicant Capacity.** Describe the applicant’s capacity to administer and complete the proposed project, including demonstrated experience in successfully managing grants and executing projects of a scope and depth comparable to those of the proposed project. Priority will be given to applicants with experience, expertise, and exceptional past project implementation performance. (Limit your response to 250 words.)
- 14. Safety Measures.** Describe how the grant will ensure the safety of participants, if applicable. (Limit your response to 200 words.)
- 15. Program Participant Costs.** Describe any costs that participants will have to pay to access programming or resources developed or supported by the project. (Limit your response to 150 words.)
- 16. Authorizations, Permits, or Approvals.** Describe any authorizations, permits, or approvals required to undertake the project, if applicable. (Limit your response to 250 words.)

Project Budget

The project budget consists of two components: (1) the detailed budget worksheet and (2) the budget narrative. The two components should complement one another and provide sufficient detail for the GLFT to evaluate whether the requested funding is appropriately aligned with the scope of work. To the extent possible, provide detailed information about line-item expenses.

Detailed Project Budget. Complete a [detailed project budget](#) form and upload it in the online application as an Excel file. A budget template and additional instructions are available for download in the online application as an Excel file. The budget should cover the total project period. If your project spans multiple years, complete one form showing a cumulative budget for the entire project period, as well as one form for each budget year. Enter the budget year on each page according to the year (for example, “Cumulative Budget” or “Budget Year 1 of 2”). The total amount requested from the GLFT should reflect the project expenses for that budget page. You may add or remove expense subcategories, but the main expense categories may not be changed. **Note:** According to the GLFT overhead policy for all projects, administrative/overhead costs are limited to 10 percent of the total salaries and wages.

More information on the budget categories is available on the [Resources](#) page.

Budget Narrative. Briefly explain how the figures in each budget category on the detailed project budget were estimated and justify the need for the costs. Projects with financial support from other sources are encouraged. Although matching funds are not required, the GLFT favors proposals that include local funding and promote community participation in the use of fishery resources. If matching funds or in-kind contributions are involved, please:

- Identify the sources and amounts and explain for each whether these have been pledged, requested, or secured
- Explain whether the GLFT funds are to be used as a match requirement and, if so, what percentage of GLFT funds would be used to complete specific items (e.g., 30 percent of needed funds for a task would be from the GLFT, 70 percent from other sources)
- Address contingency plans if pending funding from other sources is not realized

(Limit your response to 300 words.)

Chart of Work

Complete a [chart of work form](#) and upload it to the online application as an Excel file. The chart of work should complement the project description narrative and indicate major outcomes, associated activities/timelines for each outcome, associated costs for activities, and associated deliverables for each outcome. A chart of work template is available for download in the online application as an Excel file.

Additional Documents

In the online application, upload additional documents of relevance, such as figures, captions, feasibility studies, letters of support, literature citations, or other graphics. Do not use this space to provide additional language for required responses exceeding the word count limits, as they will not be considered. If the files correspond with a narrative section question, please indicate the connection to the graphic. Only PDF files will be accepted. If you have multiple pages, please merge them to create a single PDF file before uploading, when possible.