

2025 REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

New York's Great Lakes Basin Small Grants Program

New York Sea Grant (NYSG) in partnership with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) is requesting proposals for new projects that serve to benefit the environment and economy of New York's Great Lakes basin by demonstrating the application of ecosystem-based management (EBM) to local watershed challenges. The small grants program is made possible by the New York State Environmental Protection Fund and Article 14 of Environmental Conservation Law.

Proposals due on May 2, 2025, by 4:30 PM EST

TIMELINE

- **RFP Announced:** March 17, 2025
- **Webinar:** March 26, 2025, at 12:00 PM
- **Proposal Submission Deadline:** May 2, 2025 at 4:30 PM
- **Award Notification:** June 2, 2025
- **Project Term Dates:** July 1, 2025 – December 31, 2026 (18 months)

INTRODUCTION TO THE PROGRAM

With guidance from planning initiatives by New York State agencies and NYSG, New York's Great Lakes Basin (NYGLB) Small Grants Program is intended to support stakeholder-driven efforts to restore and revitalize the state's Great Lakes region and demonstrate the successful application of EBM.

New York State published the 2023 revision of the **Great Lakes Action Agenda (GLAA)**, a strategic blueprint for applying EBM principles in New York's Great Lakes basin. Developed by the NYSDEC in collaboration with partners and stakeholders, the GLAA outlines six priority goals that address critical issues such as water quality, healthy ecosystems, community resilience, and sustainability. This updated document reflects emerging challenges and revised priorities to enhance and preserve the ecological integrity, socio-economic vitality, and resilience of the region. The full [Great Lakes Action Agenda](#) document is available on the NYSDEC website.

PROJECT PRIORITIES

NYSOG is soliciting proposals up to \$40,000 in total costs for projects that advance the goals of the GLAA and implement actions identified in locally supported community plans. These plans may focus on water quality, natural resources, or sustainable land use and include, but are not limited to, Coastal Lakeshore Economy and Resiliency Regional (CLEAR) Plans, Comprehensive Plans, Harbor Management Plans, Hazard Mitigation Plans, Local Waterfront Revitalization Plans (LWRPs), Natural Resource Management Plans, Resilient NY flood mitigation studies, and Watershed Management Plans.

Proposed projects must directly originate from an approved community plan, clearly identifying the name of the plan and the specific location within the document (i.e. page and section number) where the activity is described. Additionally, eligible proposals must identify at least one or more goals and metrics from the GLAA that your proposed activity will be focused on. As applicable, projects should prioritize the implementation of natural and nature-based approaches to maximize ecosystem and public benefits, consistent with the NYS Community Risk and Resiliency Act's [Using Natural Measures to Reduce the Risk of Flooding and Erosion](#) guidance document.

Proposals should also demonstrate how an EBM approach will be applied to achieve ecological, social/community, and economic benefits.

Project examples include, but are not limited to:

- A floodplain restoration project to benefit aquatic habitat, water quality and reduce flood risk
- An ecosystem-based management shoreline study that recommends nature-based approaches for shoreline management and coastal process restoration
- Implementation of activities identified in a climate-smart comprehensive plan that support community revitalization goals, open space preservation, and/or water-dependent recreational assets
- Reviews and/or updates to municipal codes or policies that integrate resilience measures into local law

Civil works, property acquisition, infrastructure projects, and research will not be considered for this funding. Proposals requesting additional funding for previously funded projects may be submitted if the proposed activities are distinct from the previous proposal and significantly enhance and build upon the previous project. Applicants seeking support solely for continued operation or maintenance of an existing project or program will not be prioritized. Special consideration may be given to projects for which other readily available funding sources do not exist.

It is anticipated that a total of \$200,000 will be awarded to approximately 5 proposal requests.

For additional information about projects previously funded through this program, please visit the [New York's Great Lakes Basin Small Grants Program webpage](#).

WHO CAN APPLY

Proposals will be accepted from the following entities located in New York's Great Lakes basin:

- Not-for-profit organizations,
- County and local government (e.g., County Departments, cities, towns, villages, etc.),
- Public agencies, such as regional planning entities, environmental commissions and soil and water conservation districts; and,
- Educational institutions, including, but not limited to, public and private K-12 schools, Colleges, and Universities.

DURATION OF PROJECTS

Projects must be completed by December 31, 2026, though requests for no-cost extensions may be granted on a case-by-case basis.

BUDGET SIZE

Budget requests cannot exceed \$40,000.00.

COST-SHARE REQUIREMENTS

Match is not required.

HOW AND WHEN TO SUBMIT

Full proposals must be submitted by **4:30 pm EST on May 2 2025**. They must be submitted electronically through New York Sea Grant's electronic submission website which can be accessed by visiting the [New York Great Lakes Basin Small Grants webpage](https://www.nyseagrant.org/gls-small-grants). (Link: <https://www.nyseagrant.org/gls-small-grants>) The website will **not** accept proposals submitted after 4:30 pm EST.

PROPOSAL FORMAT

A standardized application cover sheet, 90-4 Budget Form, and Subcontractor Commitment Form are available through the website link above and **must** be submitted with each proposal. All proposal components must be combined into a **single PDF file** and submitted using the following file naming convention:

ProjectLeadLastName_AbbreviatedOrganization_2025Proposal.pdf

- **ProjectLeadLastName:** Use the last name of the primary project lead.
- **AbbreviatedOrganization:** Provide an abbreviation for your organization (e.g., NYSG for New York Sea Grant).
- **2025Proposal:** Include this text exactly as written to identify the proposal year.

For example, if the project lead is Jane Smith from My Organization, the file should be named: **Smith_MyOrg_2025Proposal.pdf**

Proposal Components:

1. **Cover Sheet** (Template provided on submission portal)

The cover sheet must include:

- **Project Title (100-character max.):** Write for a non-technical audience.
- **Project Lead and Team Contact Information:** Include names, addresses, phone numbers, and emails.
- **Amount Requested:** Cannot exceed \$40,000.
- **Executive Summary (200-word max.):** Provide a concise public-friendly summary of your project.

2. **Project Description** *5-page max., single-spaced, 1-inch margins, 12-point font*

The main body of the proposal should include:

- **GLAA Goal(s):** Identify the specific GLAA goal(s) and action(s) your proposal addresses. Also specify which metric(s) your project will contribute to for the GLAA goal(s) identified. Refer to the [2023 Great Lakes Action Agenda](#).
- **Annual Project Focus:** Identify the locally supported plan and specific action(s) within the plan your proposal addresses.
- **Project Summary:** Provide a clear overview of your project, including its purpose and key objectives.
- **Project Location:** Specify the location of your project. All projects must be within or directly related to NY's Great Lakes basin. Refer to the NYSDEC's [Great Lakes basin map](#).
- **Goals and Methods:** Outline the overarching goals of your project and methods for achieving them.
- **Outcomes and Deliverables:** Describe the anticipated outcomes of the project, including the benefits or changes expected. Specify the deliverables that will be produced, such as reports, tools, or other tangible products.
- **EBM Principles:** Briefly explain how the project integrates or applies ecosystem-based management principles. Refer to page 6 "Evaluation of Proposals" for EBM criteria.
- **Personnel and Collaboration:** List key personnel and identify the project lead. If collaborating with partner organizations, include the organization's name and describe the partnership's role.

3. **Personnel and Partners** *2-page max. per biographical sketch*

Include a biographical sketch for the top three personnel, including the project lead. Include name, address, phone, and email for each.

- 4. Letters of Support** (Required if activities occur on public property)
Provide a letter of support from the relevant municipal government or landowner. General support letters are not required and will not be considered.
- 5. Timeline** *1-page max.*
The timeline should include:
 - Tasks, project measures, and deliverables
 - Project start and end dates (must be completed by **December 31, 2026**)
- 6. Budget Justification:**
Explain how funds will support key project milestones, deliverables, and schedules. Provide details for each category:
 - A. **Labor Costs:** List each person separately and provide the basis for labor costs.
 - B. **Fringe Benefits:** Provide explanation of how fringe benefits are applied and provide documentation for the rate or dollar amounts assessed.
 - C. **Permanent Equipment:** Provide make, model and dollar amount. Explain whether price was determined from vendor quote, catalogue price, or past experience. Permanent equipment includes items like fish tanks, graduated cylinders, monitoring equipment, textbooks, etc.
 - D. **Expendable Supplies/Equipment:** Provide a list of expendable supplies and equipment needed for the project.
 - E. **Travel/Transportation:** Describe nature and purpose.
 - F. **Other Costs:** Provide a breakdown for items needed and include a justification.
 - G. **Indirect Costs:**
 - Use 18% of Total Direct Costs (TDC) if a federally negotiated rate exists. Attach federally negotiated rate agreements if applicable.
 - Use the 10% De Minimus rate if no federally negotiated rate exists.
- 7. Cost Reasonableness Statement:**
Cost reasonableness statements should identify how costs were determined and how they are appropriate and competitive (i.e., used market rates, competitive salaries, etc.). Budget justifications and cost reasonableness statements are not the same.
- 8. 90-4 Budget Form:** (Form provided on submission portal)
Use the provided form to detail the project's budget.
- 9. Subcontractor Commitment Form:** (Form provided on submission portal)
All applicants must complete and submit the provided Subcontractor Commitment Form with their proposal. If awarded, your organization will be considered a subcontractor under Cornell University.

ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS OF SUCCESSFUL APPLICANTS

- **Certificate of Liability Insurance:** Applicants will need insurance coverage. At this time, do not include proof of insurance. However, should funding be awarded you will be required to provide proof of insurance, Workman's Compensation and Disability benefits.
- **Audited Statements:** Please be aware that if you are successful, in order to process the award, we will require a recent Single Audit or recent audited financial statements.
- **Permits/Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP):** For all projects requiring permits or a QAPP, all necessary permits must be obtained prior to receiving the award. For specific QAPP requirements see the QAPP section at the end of the RFP.
- **Documentation of Ownership and Public Interest in Property:** Prior to receiving the award, successful applicants must be able to document adequate ownership rights in and to the subject property, and that the ownership or use of the subject property is of a public nature.
- **Municipal Endorsement:** Prior to receiving the award, successful applicants must provide a municipal endorsement and authorization to conduct the proposed project on municipal property.

EVALUATION OF PROPOSALS

All proposals that are complete and meet the deadline will be evaluated by a technical review team consisting of, at a minimum, members of NYSG, NYSDEC, and other State agencies. Incomplete proposals will not be reviewed.

The review team will evaluate complete proposals for projects located within or directly related to New York's Great Lakes basin based on the following criteria:

- Degree to which the proposed project aligns with actions specifically identified within a locally supported plan.
- Degree to which the proposed project aligns with one or more of the actions and associated metrics listed under one or more GLAA goals.
- Degree to which the proposed project integrates the EBM principles and describes how they will be applied. The NYSDEC defines EBM as a systems approach that strives to balance the needs of people, nature, and the economy through science-based decision-making. EBM meets all the following criteria:
 - Is specific to a place, focusing on natural boundaries
 - Considers natural and human-made systems and their relationships
 - Uses the latest science and social science
 - Considers ecological, social, and economic concerns
 - Uses adaptive management, changing to fit the situation

- Promotes sustainable uses of resources
- Protects ecological services, functions, and processes
- Requires ongoing collaboration of many stakeholders and partners
- Appropriateness of the proposed project's defined measurable outcomes or deliverables regarding the project goals and whether they can be completed within the project term (18 months).
- Qualifications and experience of the project team.
- Degree to which the proposed project demonstrates coordination with appropriate partners to strengthen the chance of achieving project goals and avoid duplication of effort.
- Appropriateness of budget.
- Degree to which the proposed project includes an outreach component to support broad-scale communication and/or application of project results.
- Degree to which the proposed project builds local and/or organizational capacity for future related projects.
- Degree to which the proposed project demonstrates benefits to an Environmental Justice community or other disadvantaged or underserved area. Applicants may reference the resources listed below:
 - [NYSG's Environmental Justice Mapping Tools Guide](#)
 - [NYS Energy Research and Development Authority's Disadvantaged Communities Map](#)

For additional information on how completed proposals will be scored based on the above criteria, please see the supplemental scoring criteria document available on the submission portal.

FUNDING GUIDELINES

Applicants selected for an award will receive a subaward from Cornell University under Prime Award #CM04068 Project MOU OSP170672. The subaward must be fully executed before invoicing can commence. Funds are available for specific costs associated with project implementation and for general overhead expenses as outlined in section 6 Budget Justification. The selected projects will require invoicing for reimbursement, including a copy of all receipts. If you are selected for funding, in addition to electronic copies of any products produced, you will be required to send progress status reports and invoices at the end of each calendar quarter, and a final report along with an evaluation of your project, electronically, to the New York Sea Grant office.

WEBINAR

A single informational webinar will be held during the open application period on **Wednesday, March 26, 2025, at 12:00 PM**. This webinar will provide guidance on the application process and include presentations from project leaders about previously funded projects. Please register on the [New York Great Lakes Basin Small Grants webpage](#). (Link: <https://nyseagrant.org/glsmallgrants>)

CONTACT INFORMATION

For any questions regarding this RFP, registering for the webinar, or general questions about the small grants program, please contact:

Megan Cochran (*she/her*)
Great Lakes Outreach Coordinator
New York Sea Grant
Email: mk2236@cornell.edu
Phone: (716) 270-2490

QAPP REQUIREMENTS:

Quality Assurance: Quality assurance applies to all programs/projects that involve the collection, generation or use of environmental data associated with the mapping, modeling, monitoring, and assessment of water quality data intended for use by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) for its regulatory purposes. This includes the design or use of water quality-focused environmental technology. Guidance and resources for NYSDEC's quality assurance can be found on [NYSDEC's quality assurance webpage](#). For programs/projects that involve the assessment or monitoring of water quality; all monitoring and measurement activities conducted in the field or laboratory shall be:

- Performed in accordance with an effective quality system for planning and assessing environmental measurements and tests, and for conducting required quality assurance and quality control procedures to promote and maintain the accuracy and reliability of environmental measurements and test results. An effective Quality System includes a Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP) based on guidance provided by the USEPA Guidance for Quality Assurance Project Plans (QA/G-5 May 2006) or a similarly structured and purposed protocol.
- Performed by a laboratory certified by the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) under the Environmental Laboratory Approval Program (ELAP) pursuant to Section 502 of the Public Health Law. This requirement shall not apply to specific parameters when NYSDOH ELAP has not issued a certificate for the specific parameter.
- Performed in a manner that ensures all requisite quality control and calibration requirements are met including field testing, sample collection, preservation, and record keeping. Basic quality assurance and quality control requirements defined in 40 CFR Part 136.7 shall be followed as well as any specific method requirements.

The small grantee/subawardee agrees that any work products including but not limited to water quality data or environmental information; measured, generated, or developed under this small grant/subaward cannot be released, published, cited, or shared in draft or final form without the prior written authorization of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation Division of Water.