POLICY ON SMALL GRANTS

Background

The Great Lakes Fishery Trust (GLFT) supports a wide range of projects in its various grant programs. Grants are generally awarded through competitive requests for proposals issued for each tailored to the specific priorities of each grant program. These comprehensive applications support the Fishery Trust's evaluation of proposals' alignment with GLFT priorities and likeness of success. At the same time, the rigor of the application process results in larger scale projects advancing through GLFT systems because the depth and complexity of applications creates a higher administrative burden than is worthwhile for many small projects.

Program Goals and Eligible Activities

To streamline the submission and review process of smaller scale projects, the Great Lakes Fishery Trust will accept proposals of less than $20,000 using a generalized application that is narrower in scope than program specific requests for proposals.

The GLFT will consider smaller grants that demonstrate a direct contribution to one or more of the GLFT's program areas as defined by the respective policy documents or most recent grant program RFPs : Additionally, this mechanism will integrate the GLFT mechanism for funding of symposia, workshops, and conferences.

The GLFT will support symposia, workshops, and conferences that directly contribute to the understanding of one or more of the permissible uses of GLFT funds (public education on the Great Lakes fisheries, Great Lakes fisheries research, rehabilitation of Great Lakes fish populations, Great Lakes fishing access, and protection and enhancement of Great Lakes fisheries habitat). Requests for funding will be evaluated for compatibility with the guiding principles, mission, vision, and mandate of the GLFT. GLFT-supported symposia, workshops, and conferences will include appropriate recognition of the GLFT and, where possible, highlight GLFT-funded projects.

Funding Criteria

If the proposed project meets the criteria for one or more of the elements described above, the GLFT will consider the following criteria when determining whether or not to fund the project and for what amount:

- Available funding in the Small Grants budget allocation.
- Potential negative impacts of not funding the proposal or not funding it at the level requested
- Availability of alternative funding sources to the applicant for all or a portion of the funds requested
- Contributions or commitments from other organizations to help implement the proposal
- Level of support from stakeholders targeted to benefit from the proposed project
- Precedents involved in providing funds for the proposed activity based upon past and future grant activities of the Trust
- Value of the proposed activity with respect to achieving GLFT strategic plan priorities and preferred outcomes
- Technical and/or scientific foundation for the proposal
- Likelihood that the project can achieve its objectives
- Methods proposed to evaluate results
- Experience, expertise, and past performance of the applicant
- Thoroughness of the proposal to allow the board to evaluate the project
- Demonstration that any relationships with existing projects are complementary
- Ability of the applicant to comply with general grant requirements for all organizations funded by the Fishery Trust

Approval Process

To increase funding flexibility, small grant requests will be approved by Small Grants Committee. The committee will consist of up to three Board of Trustees members, selected by the board, and three Scientific Advisory Team (SAT) representatives, selected by the SAT, and the GLFT manager. The committee will operate on a consensus basis. If the committee cannot reach consensus on a funding decision the matter will be brought before the full board for resolution. Similarly, the committee may determine that additional review is needed by the board, SAT, research peer review panel, or stewardship review committee, at its discretion.

Approved by the Great Lakes Fishery Trust Board of Trustees on November 12, 2025.