Request for Qualifications and Scope of Services

Title:	Independent Contractor, Fisheries Research Grants (Great Lakes Fishery Trust)
Classification:	Independent contractor; 460 hours (400 research grants program; 60 Lake Whitefish Initiative) from January 1, 2027, to December 31, 2027

Summary

The Great Lakes Fishery Trust (GLFT) is a multimillion-dollar nonprofit foundation, managed by Public Sector Consultants (PSC), that has invested more than $32.8 million in Great Lakes fisheries research over the past 20 years. As manager of the GLFT, PSC is seeking an independent contractor to lead the GLFT's competitive research grants cycle, including supporting and facilitating its peer review panel and external peer review process, and to support its directed lake whitefish research initiative. The contractor will work closely with the GLFT's Scientific Advisory Team (SAT), Board of Trustees, applicants, grantees, and PSC's environment and natural resources team. The contractor will coordinate with the GLFT trust manager, who reviews and accepts deliverables and retains sole approval and signature authority over grant agreements, amendments, and disbursements. The contractor will determine the methods and schedule for performing the services, consistent with the deliverables and timelines outlined in this scope of services.

Scope of Services

The contractor will manage the GLFT's fisheries research grant programs, working closely with the SAT, peer review panel, Board of Trustees, applicants, grantees, and PSC staff. The services include the following:

Research Program Request for Proposals Cycle

- Leads the competitive research grants cycle for the GLFT's Ecological and Biological Research to Inform Management and Human Dimensions Research and Engagement programs, which release a joint request for proposals (RFP) in alternating years (2027, 2029, 2031, and so on); Research themes have recently been realigned to better address current management priorities, and the number of proposals may be greater than what the GLFT has historically received, which has been 10–15 full proposals per cycle
- Configures each funding opportunity in the grant management system (GMS), including updating full proposal review questionnaires, creating the opportunity, and confirming it is open to invited applicants
- Serves as the main point of contact for applicants and grantees, including consulting with prospective applicants before they apply, answering questions about eligibility, priorities, and budgets, and conducting outreach to previous applicants and grant recipients to encourage strong proposals (approximately 17 applications were received in the most recent cycle)
- Screens proposals for eligibility, including relevance to the Lake Michigan fishery and clear management or policy implications, coordinates SAT review of preproposals for relevance, and sends invitation and notification emails to preproposal applicants
- Prepares peer review summaries and peer panel recommendation summaries, and facilitates the review of funding recommendations as they move from the peer review panel to the SAT and to the Board of Trustees for final decision
- Drafts award and decline letters and provides constructive feedback to applicants, including the peer panel summary and anonymized external reviews
- Prepares grant agreements with successful applicants for trust manager approval and signature

Research Program Peer Review Panel and External Peer Review

- Serves as the primary liaison to the GLFT's six-member peer review panel, which meets biennially (with the opportunity to convene in nonprogrammatic years) to review hypothesis-based research proposals and make funding recommendations to the SAT
- Confirms panel appointments, assigns each member as lead reviewer for a subset of two to three proposals, and prepares review materials, including redacted preproposals for blind review and full proposal packages posted to the panel meeting page
- Administers the panel's conflict-of-interest and confidentiality requirements, including collecting disclosures, reassigning reviews when conflicts arise, and safeguarding proposal materials
- Recruits and manages external peer reviewers, securing two to four reviews per full proposal, including developing reviewer lists from applicant, staff, and SAT nominations, issuing

invitations, linking reviewers to proposals in the GMS, tracking completion, and compiling reviews for the panel
- Schedules and facilitates the panel meeting, including the agenda, meeting logistics, and preparation of travel reimbursement and honoraria requests for PSC processing
- Writes the peer panel summary and recommendations document and cover memo for the SAT, and anonymizes external reviews for SAT and applicant use

Lake Whitefish Initiative

- Coordinates the monthly virtual lake whitefish workgroup of board and SAT members, which guides the GLFT's lake whitefish genetic rescue strategy and directed grantmaking, including developing agendas and meeting materials and preparing meeting summaries
- Participates on behalf of the GLFT in bimonthly whitefish rescue strategy coalition meetings, led by The Nature Conservancy alongside Tribal governments, state and federal agencies, and nongovernmental organizations, to address the collapse of lake whitefish populations
- Supports the selection of directed lake whitefish research projects, including coordinating review of gamete collection and related proposals from Tribal and state partners and advancing new proposals that align with the GLFT's $650,000 directed grant allocation
- Incorporates findings from The Nature Conservancy's broodstock and hatchery capacity white paper into funding priorities across relevant grant programs
- Supports coalition-based advocacy with philanthropic entities, such as the Great Lakes Funders, and other organizational partners to align federal and state resources, such as Great Lakes Restoration Initiative funding, with lake whitefish conservation

Research Program Grant Management and Governance Support

- Manages approximately 15 active research and directed grants, including preparing grant agreements and amendments for trust manager approval, confirming contingencies, tracking progress reports and project performance, and preparing grant disbursement requests for trust manager approval
- Maintains accurate grant records in the GMS and prepares monthly reports
- Prepares for and participates in SAT and Board of Trustees meetings, including premeeting planning and debriefs, research program reports, and topical discussions
- Coordinates research communications content, such as *Research Notes* and newsletter items, with PSC's production and communications staff
- Maintains the confidentiality of proposals, reviews, and grant records, exercising discretion with sensitive information
- Recommends process improvements that strengthen the efficiency and quality of research grantmaking

Anticipated 2027 Schedule of Effort

The year 2027 is an RFP year for the competitive research grants program. The refined RFP will be released in November 2026. The contractor's work will begin in January with the receipt of preproposals. The 2027 contract totals 460 hours: 400 hours for the competitive research grants program and 60 hours for the directed Lake Whitefish Initiative incorporating the preceding duties and tasks.

Research Program, Ongoing Grants (Included in the Monthly Research Hours):

- Administers active competitive research grants, including progress tracking, disbursements, and coordination with PSC staff to issue agreements and amendments
- Maintains records in the GMS, reviews monthly grant status reports, and conducts outreach to support proposal development

Lake Whitefish Initiative, Ongoing (60 Hours, About Five Hours Per Month):

- Provides technical support and recommendations for the ongoing Lake Whitefish Initiative of the GLFT
- Coordinates the monthly virtual lake whitefish workgroup and attends bimonthly whitefish rescue strategy coalition meetings
- Advances directed lake whitefish proposals within the $650,000 allocation and incorporates white paper findings into funding priorities
- Reviews and provides feedback on any new directed grants in 2027
- Administers active directed grant agreements

Month	Key Research Grant Milestones	Research	Whitefish	Total
January	Receive preproposals; screen for eligibility and relevance; answer applicant questions; prepare redacted preproposal summary and review assignments for the SAT	40	5	45
February	Facilitate SAT review of preproposals; send full proposal invitations and notifications; confirm peer review panel appointments and schedule the June panel meeting	45	5	50
March	Support invited applicants as they develop full proposals; build the external peer reviewer list; update review questionnaires in the GMS	25	5	30
April	Receive and process full proposals; coordinate external peer reviewers; assign panel lead reviewers; screen for conflicts of interest	45	5	50
May	Coordinate external peer review (2–4 reviews per proposal); track completion; post proposal packages to the panel meeting page	35	5	40

Month	Key Research Grant Milestones	Research	Whitefish	Total
June	Compile and post external reviews; facilitate the peer review panel meeting; process travel reimbursements and honoraria; begin the panel summary	55	5	60
July	Finalize the peer panel summary, recommendations, and cover memo; anonymize external reviews; prepare SAT and board materials	40	5	45
August	Facilitate SAT review of full proposals and board review of funding recommendations; draft award and decline letters	50	5	55
September	Send award and decline letters with feedback to unsuccessful applicants; begin grant agreements for new awards	30	5	35
October	Prepare new grant agreements for trust manager approval and set up progress-report schedules in the GMS	15	5	20
November	Administer active grants; document lessons learned and process improvements for the 2029 cycle	10	5	15
December	Close out the year's administrative work; coordinate *Research Notes* and newsletter items; prepare year-end reporting; plan for 2028 activities	10	5	15
Total	**Research grants program and Lake Whitefish Initiative**	**400**	**60**	**460**

Hours are estimates for planning purposes. Actual effort will vary depending on the number of proposals received, the timing of SAT and board meetings, and the pace of directed lake whitefish projects. The contractor determines how to schedule the work to meet these milestones. Hours may shift between months, but the contract is capped at 460 hours (400 research; 60 lake whitefish) unless amended in writing.

Experience Sought

- A master's degree or higher in fisheries or aquatic science, natural resource management, or a related field; or a bachelor's degree in one of these fields with at least three years of relevant experience
- Working knowledge of Great Lakes fisheries, aquatic ecology, and fisheries management, including familiarity with human dimensions (social and economic) research, and the ability to read, summarize, and explain technical proposals and findings for nontechnical audiences such as board members
- Experience administering research grants, scientific peer review, or competitive funding programs, including managing review timelines and reviewer communications
- Experience coordinating or facilitating scientific committees, advisory panels, or multipartner workgroups

- Strong writing skills, including the ability to produce concise summaries, memos, and correspondence on deadline
- Sound judgment in handling confidential materials and managing conflicts of interest
- Ability to build productive relationships with researchers, Tribal nations, state and federal agencies, funders, and nonprofit organizations
- Ability to work independently and manage a variable workload, including capacity during RFP and review periods
- Proficiency with Microsoft Office (Word, PowerPoint, and Excel); experience with online grant management systems preferred

Contract Requirements

- Provides status updates on deliverables and upcoming deadlines at intervals agreed with the trust manager
- Delivers work products that meet the deliverables and timelines in this scope of services
- Tracks and reports hours and deliverables according to the terms of the contract
- Attends peer review panel, SAT, Board of Trustees, and workgroup meetings as scheduled by those bodies, some of which may fall outside regular business hours

Work Location and Equipment

Services are performed remotely, with occasional in-person attendance at the peer review panel meeting and at SAT and Board of Trustees meetings in Michigan. Work is primarily performed at a computer and in virtual meetings. The workload varies throughout the year and is heaviest during RFP releases, proposal reviews, and board decision periods. The contractor provides their own computer and workspace.

Compensation and Contract Terms

- Hourly rate of $150 for 460 hours over the contract term (400 hours for the research grants program and 60 hours for the Lake Whitefish Initiative)
- Contract term of January 1, 2027, through December 31, 2027; the engagement may be renewed by mutual written agreement for future RFP cycles, under a new contract and scope of services for each cycle
- This engagement will be contracted through PSC, which manages the GLFT
- Payment made monthly upon receipt of an invoice documenting hours and tasks completed
- Reimbursement of preapproved travel expenses
- As an independent contractor, the contractor is responsible for their own taxes, insurance, and equipment and is not eligible for PSC employee benefits

- The contractor operates as an independent business and may provide services to other clients during the contract term

To Submit Qualifications

Submit a statement of qualifications (cover letter and resume or firm profile), business information (business name and entity type, if any, and current clients or engagements), and a brief statement of availability (estimated hours per month and any known conflicts during peak review periods) through the posting at www.glft.org/about/ or email these materials to glft@glft.org by 5:00 p.m. EST on Wednesday, December 16, 2026. All materials must be submitted as PDF or Word documents.