



Chi-Cal Rivers Fund

2020 REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Full Proposal Due Date: **Thursday, July 9 by 10:59 PM Central Time**

OVERVIEW

The Chi-Cal Rivers Fund (Fund) is inviting applications for competitive grant funding. With a focus on the major waterways of the Chicago and Calumet region, the program will award grants to reduce stormwater runoff with green infrastructure, enhance fish and wildlife habitat and improve public access to and use of natural areas. Approximately **\$1 million** is expected to be available for grant awards. Individual grants typically range from \$100,000 to \$300,000. Proposals must be submitted online (easygrants.nfwf.org) by **10:59 PM Central Time on July 9, 2020**.

BACKGROUND

The Chicago and Calumet Rivers are part of a highly engineered system of waterways that nonetheless provide many benefits and services to the region. They offer capacity for managing flood waters, serve as economically important conduits for commercial shipping, tourism and recreation, and provide vital habitats for many resident and migratory wildlife species. However, the waterways have also been degraded by many stressors. Today, dangerous flooding and other threats associated with more frequent and intensifying storm events, impaired water quality, habitat degradation, and limited safe public access significantly reduce many of the ecological, economic and community values of the region.

A team of private and public organizations established the Chi-Cal Rivers Fund to help improve the ability of the region's natural systems and communities to withstand and absorb the impacts of environmental stressors and enhance the region's unique habitats and waterways through strategically coordinated investments. Administered by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF), the Fund is a partnership among ArcelorMittal, BNSF Railway, The Chicago Community Trust, the Crown Family, the Gaylord and Dorothy Donnelley Foundation, the Joyce Foundation, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the U.S. Forest Service and the Walder Foundation. The Fund achieves its impact by supporting projects focused on three goals: 1) enhancing fish and wildlife habitat; 2) reducing stormwater runoff with green infrastructure; and 3) improving public-use opportunities and access to natural areas.



CROWN FAMILY PHILANTHROPIES



THE CHICAGO
COMMUNITY TRUST
AND AFFILIATES



GAYLORD AND
DOROTHY DONNELLEY
FOUNDATION



TheJoyceFoundation



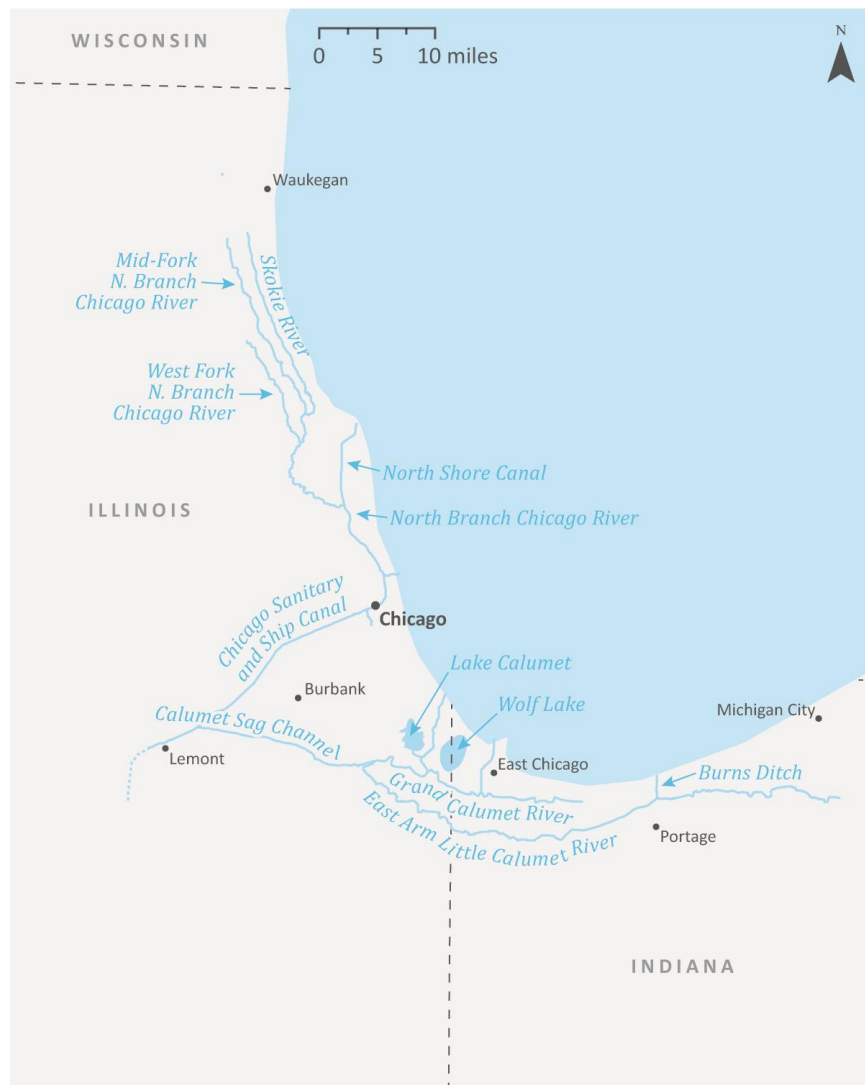
NFWF



The Fund supports projects that advance the goals of the [Cook County Stormwater Management Plan](#), the [City of Chicago Green Stormwater Infrastructure Strategy](#), the City of Chicago Resiliency Strategy - “[Resilient Chicago](#)”, the [Grand Calumet River Area of Concern Remedial Action Plan](#), [ON TO 2050](#), the [Marquette Plan](#), the [Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission 2040 Comprehensive Regional Plan](#), [Our Great Rivers](#) and other ongoing strategies designed to restore the health, vitality, climate resilience and accessibility of the waterways in Chicago and the Calumet region. Applicants are encouraged to align their proposed projects with those regional efforts and demonstrate how they would complement and connect to other previous and ongoing work in the region.

GEOGRAPHIC FOCUS

To be eligible for funding, projects must occur in close proximity to or otherwise demonstrate direct benefits to the major waterways of the system and their tributaries (depicted in the map below). Some of the available grant funding must be directed to projects in northwest Indiana.



* Cities included for geographic orientation, but do not indicate funding preference

PROGRAM PRIORITIES

With an emphasis along the major waterways of the system, the Fund will award grants in the following three categories.

1. *Habitat Quality*
2. *Green Stormwater Infrastructure*
3. *Public Access*

Each applicant will need to identify one category that best describes the proposed project. If a project is expected to yield benefits in multiple categories, an applicant may also identify relevant secondary categories. The following sections provide more information on the three funding categories.

Funding Category 1: Habitat Quality

Funding in this category will support riparian and in-stream habitat improvements along or near the major waterways of the system listed under the Geographic Focus section. Competitive projects will improve water quality, reduce erosion, and increase the complexity, connectivity and quality of habitat. Priority will be given to projects that improve native/natural habitat, benefit species of concern, and increase biodiversity and maintain healthy native populations. Invasive species control activities, including initial treatments, subsequent retreatments and early detection and rapid response (EDRR) are eligible for funding in this category as a component of a comprehensive habitat restoration project. Applicants demonstrating the capacity, experience, and resources needed to effectively manage invasive species and preserve habitat values following initial treatments will be most competitive. Summaries of projects funded previously can be viewed at: <https://www.nfwf.org/sites/default/files/2020-05/chi-cal-habitat-projects.pdf>

Funding Category 2: Green Stormwater Infrastructure

Funding in this category will support green stormwater infrastructure (GSI) projects that improve stormwater capture and storage to reduce runoff and urban flooding, improve water quality and aquatic environments. Eligible work includes:

- 1) Install new GS practices including but not limited to: constructing stormwater wetlands, restoring urban forests or other floodplain open spaces to improve stormwater storage through restoration, installing rain gardens, bioswales, green roofs, pervious surfaces, and other green infrastructure solutions
- 2) Maintaining and/or improving the function of existing GSI installations

Competitive projects will occur in close proximity or otherwise demonstrate direct benefits to priority waterways, as indicated in the Geographic Focus section. Projects must add a minimum of 50,000 gallons of stormwater storage capacity annually to be competitive. Preference will be given to projects of sufficient size and scope to significantly reduce runoff and contaminant discharge (i.e. reduction of nutrients, pollution, and sediment) and increase GSI function at a regional or significant scale (gallons). Proposals seeking funds for maintenance of GSI at

multiple sites should outline their authority to maintain those sites. Small, isolated projects (e.g., a single parking lot) without a connection to a larger green infrastructure plan will not be competitive.

Priority will be given to projects that incorporate planning for increasingly severe and more frequent storm events into their design, location, and/or function. Proposals are encouraged to utilize native or non-invasive, urban-adapted plant and tree species designed to improve habitat for pollinators or diversify and sustain the urban canopy. Applicants are encouraged to build in training/capacity needs to maintain projects after the life of the grant. Summaries of previously funded projects can be viewed at: https://www.nfwf.org/sites/default/files/2020-05/chi-cal-gswi_projects.pdf

All applications must report anticipated outcomes in terms of gallons of stormwater storage capacity added (design retention capacity) and estimate the volume of stormwater runoff captured and infiltrated per year (gallons/year). Applications proposing GSI maintenance or enhancement must report anticipated outcomes in terms of gallons of stormwater storage capacity preserved/maintained (design retention capacity) and report the volume of stormwater runoff captured and infiltrated per year (gallons/year) when GSI functions optimally as a result of maintenance activities. Applicants are encouraged to use the EPA storm water calculator tool, found by [clicking here](#), to estimate design retention capacity. For tree planting projects, applicants are encouraged to use i-Tree, found by [clicking here](#), to calculate gallons of storm water taken up annually by tree planting projects (use a 10-year tree age for measuring stormwater benefits in i-Tree).

Funding Category 3: Public Access

Funding in this category will support the creation of new and or/enhancement of interventions designed to improve public access and connectivity to, understanding, and use of natural areas in close proximity to the major waterways of the system depicted under the Geographic Focus section. Public access improvement may include but are not limited to construction of trails, green space, public access points, and infrastructure enabling use of waterways and habitats, such as paddle craft launches, wildlife viewing areas, etc. Priority will be given to projects that incorporate habitat restoration and/or green stormwater infrastructure elements into their design. All proposals should describe the rationale for selecting the project location, public access or greenspace elements proposed, identify the communities and/or target audiences that will be served by the project and how they will be meaningfully and actively engaged in the project to encourage public use of the asset.

Priority will also be given to projects that were developed through community input and co-design processes. The most competitive projects will incorporate planning for increasingly severe and more frequent storm events into their design, location, and/or function. Summaries of projects funded previously can be viewed at: <https://www.nfwf.org/sites/default/files/2020-05/chi-cal-public-use-projects.pdf>

LONG-TERM OPERATION, MAINTENANCE AND MONITORING

To help ensure project benefits will be sustained through time, grantees will be required to present or develop plans that address project site operation and management needs for at least five (5) years after project completion. The plans should describe anticipated actions needed (maintenance schedules and tasks to be completed at scheduled intervals), access to or ownership of equipment needed to maintain project sites cost estimates, sources of funding to support long-term maintenance plan, long-term partners, parties responsible for implementation and oversight training needs and the applicant’s and partners’ capacity for long-term stewardship of the project. If applicable, the plan should also describe long term invasive species management and early detection rapid response (EDRR) protocol. A portion of individual grant awards may be used to support plan development, and plans must be completed prior to the end dates specified in individual grant agreements.

Priority will be given to projects that use the proposal narrative to describe a monitoring plan to measure the outcomes and assess the success of the proposed project. At a minimum, the description should: 1) indicate the metrics that will be used to track progress and quantify outcomes; 2) outline the approach for establishing baseline conditions against which post-implementation conditions will be compared; and 3) demonstrate plans and resources for post-implementation monitoring.

Applicants may use grant funding to support monitoring activities associated with the proposed project within the proposed grant period. Applicants are encouraged to direct up to 15 percent of the project budget toward this need. Some projects, particularly those proposing experimental techniques, may warrant using a larger amount of the project budget for monitoring.

METRICS

To better gauge progress on individual grants and to ensure greater consistency of project data provided by multiple grants, the Chi-Cal Rivers Fund has a list of metrics in Easygrants for grantees to choose from for reporting (all possible program metrics are shown in the table below). Only metrics relevant to the project being proposed should be selected in the application. Applicants will be required to report project accomplishments in terms of the metrics they select. If you do not believe an applicable metric has been provided, please contact Aislinn Gauchay (aislinn.gauchay@nfwf.org) to discuss acceptable alternatives.

Funding Category	Recommended Metrics <i>*Required metric</i>	Additional Guidance
Habitat Quality	Riparian restoration – miles restored	
	Instream restoration – miles restored	
	Instream restoration - # habitat structures installed	Enter the number of habitat structures installed, replaced, upgraded or repaired for improvement of instream habitat
	# passage barriers rectified	Enter number of barriers to aquatic connectivity

		removed, remediated, or improved
	Miles of stream opened	Enter miles of stream opened for fish passage
	Acres of wetland habitat restored	
	Acres restored (invasive species removed)	Enter the number of acres on which invasive species were controlled (this will be a subset of restoration acres; non-cumulative with other acre restoration metrics)
	Erosion control - lbs sediment avoided (annually)	
	BMP implementation for nutrient reduction - lbs phosphorus prevented from entering (annually)	
	BMP implementation for nutrient reduction - lbs nitrogen prevented from entering (annually)	
Green Stormwater Infrastructure	*Gallons stormwater storage added	Enter the volume (in gallons) of stormwater storage added through green infrastructure improvements (measured as design retention capacity for a 100-year 24-hour storm). For GSI maintenance projects, enter volume (gallons) of stormwater storage maintained via this metric. In comments, include projection of gallons of stormwater captured or infiltrated annually
	Impervious Surface Removed	Indicate the square feet of impervious surface retrofitted with green infrastructure
	Square feet of green infrastructure installed	Enter square feet of GSI installed. For GSI maintenance projects, enter square feet of GSI maintained via this metric
	Number of trees planted	
Public Access	Infrastructure - acres of greenspace	Enter the acres of green space and habitat created or improved
	Infrastructure - miles trails developed/improved	Enter the number of miles of trails or river walks developed or improved
	Infrastructure - access pts developed/improved	
Additional Metrics for All Funding Categories	Number of volunteer hours	
	# people reached	Provide total # of people reached by grant activities throughout the period of performance. People reached should reflect the number of community members (volunteers, local groups, residents) meaningfully engaged in the project design, implementation, or who utilize the project's on-the-ground assets post-implementation. If the applicant will be measuring public use of grant investments post-implementation,

		please indicate the method of measurement to validate the use estimate (e.g. trail counters, volunteer observations, etc.)
	# jobs created	Provide number of individuals hired by organization or contractor directly working on the project (non-volunteers) during the project period. This reflects the addition of new jobs to the local and regional economy as the result of the work proposed in the grant.
	# jobs sustained	Provide # jobs continued or sustained through the grant. Jobs should be directly engaged in project activities, exist prior to the grant period, and be sustained beyond the end of the grant.

ELIGIBILITY

Eligible and Ineligible Entities

- Eligible applicants include non-profit 501(c) organizations, state government agencies, local governments, municipal governments, tribal governments, and educational institutions. To be competitive, applicant organizations must demonstrate capacity and experience commensurate with the scale of the project being proposed and the funding being requested.
- Ineligible applicants include federal government agencies, unincorporated individuals, and private for-profit businesses.

Ineligible Uses of Grant Funds

- NFWF funds and matching contributions may not be used to support political advocacy, fundraising, lobbying, litigation, terrorist activities or Foreign Corrupt Practices Act violations.
- NFWF funds may not be used to support ongoing efforts to comply with legal requirements, including permit conditions, mitigation and settlement agreements. However, grant funds may be used to support projects that enhance or improve upon existing baseline compliance efforts.

FUNDING AVAILABILITY

Approximately **\$1 million** is expected to be available for grant awards in 2020. Individual grant awards will range from **\$100,000 to \$300,000**.

PROJECT DURATION

Anticipated completion time for funded projects will typically be two (2) years or two field seasons following finalization of a grant agreement. Projects may be a discrete part of a longer-term project, provided there are definable outcomes for the proposed phase of the overall effort. The project narrative should include a clear timetable or schedule for project completion. Project start and end dates should define the period during which all proposed work is accomplished, all requested funds are spent, and all matching contributions are spent or applied.

MATCHING CONTRIBUTIONS

The ratio of matching contributions offered to grant funding requested is one criterion considered during the review process. Projects that meet or exceed a 1:1 match ratio to grant request tend to be most competitive, but providing 1:1 match is not required for a project to be eligible or considered for funding. Matching contributions provided in your proposal should represent the total leverage brought to bear for the proposed project and may include cash, in-kind contributions of staff and volunteer time, work performed, materials and services donated, or other tangible contributions to the project objectives and outcomes. The cost of land acquisition or easement may also qualify as match for a project involving work at the protected site. In addition, eligible indirect costs (that would not be paid with requested grant funding) may be applied as match. More information about using indirect costs as match can be found at: www.nfwf.org/whatwedo/grants/applicants/Pages/indirect-policy.aspx.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

All proposals will be screened for relevance, accuracy, completeness and compliance with organizational and funding source policies. Then, the Chi-Cal Rivers Fund advisory team and a panel of state and federal agency reviewers will use the following criteria for project selections. Project selections may also be based on other considerations, such as availability of funding, geographic balance, and balance among project types and grant size.

Strategic Value

- **Program goals:** Project aligns with program goals and has specific, quantifiable performance metrics to evaluate project success. Project addresses one or more of the funding categories.
- **Landscape context:** Project occurs in close proximity to or otherwise demonstrates benefits to the major waterways of the system, as listed under the Geographic Eligibility section. Green infrastructure installation is located in flood-prone areas identified as priorities by government units or approved land-use or watershed plans.
- **Plan alignment:** Project advances an existing local, regional, tribal, state or federal plan or strategy.

- **Technical merit:** Project is technically sound and feasible, and the proposal sets forth a clear, logical and achievable work plan and timeline. Project engages appropriate technical experts throughout project planning, design implementation and maintenance.
- **Climate Resilience in Design:** Project incorporates planning for increasingly severe and more frequent storm events and other climate-driven threats into their design, location, and/or function.
- **Matching contributions:** Project offers matching contributions that will enhance and leverage the impact of a grant award. Projects that meet or exceed a 1:1 match ratio tend to be more competitive.

Qualifications

- **Organizational capacity:** Applicant organization demonstrates capacity and experience commensurate with the scale of the project being proposed and the funding requested.
- **Past success:** Project team has a proven track record of success in implementing practices with specific, measurable results.
- **Partnerships:** An appropriate partnership exists to implement the project and the project is supported by a strong local partnership that leverages additional funds and will sustain it after the life of the grant. Identify proposed partners, if known (including potential or contemplated subawards to third party subrecipients of the applicant), the roles they will play in implementing the project, and how this project will build new or enhance existing partnerships. (Note: a project partner is any local community, non-profit organization, tribe, and/or local, state, and federal government agency that contributes to the project in a substantial way and is closely involved in the completion of the project.)
- **Funding need:** Project establishes a clear need for the funds being requested, and demonstrates that activities would not move forward absent funding.

Implementation

- **On-the-ground implementation:** Project will apply the bulk (>70%) of grant funding to on-the-ground work, with the option of using the remaining funds for planning, permitting, final design, engineering, outreach, education, maintenance or monitoring.
- **Cost-effectiveness:** Project includes a cost-effective budget that balances performance risk and efficient use of funds. Cost-effectiveness evaluation may include, but is not limited to, an assessment of either or both direct and indirect costs in the proposed budget. The federal government has determined that a *de minimis* 10% indirect rate is an acceptable minimum for organizations without a NICRA, as such NFWF reserves the right to scrutinize **ALL** proposals with indirect rates above 10% for cost-effectiveness.

- **Timeliness:** Project has completed or nearly completed planning, design and engineering to the extent that on-the-ground implementation can begin shortly after the grant is awarded.

Evaluation and Maintenance

- **Monitoring:** Project includes plans to monitor progress during and after implementation to track project success and adaptively address new challenges and opportunities.
- **Long-term sustainability:** Project will be maintained to ensure benefits are achieved and sustained over time. Plans described in the proposal include how future funding will be secured to implement necessary long-term monitoring and maintenance activities.

Amplification

- **Communication:** Project includes a communication strategy for notifying relevant communities and audiences about the project after completion.
- **Scalability:** Project has the potential to catalyze additional efforts in communities or settings where it has not been broadly deployed, including underserved neighborhoods.
- **Transferability:** Project has potential and plan to transfer lessons learned to other communities and/or to be integrated into government programs and policies.

OTHER

Budget: Costs are allowable, reasonable and budgeted in accordance with NFWF's [Budget Instructions](#) cost categories. Federally-funded projects must be in compliance with [OMB Uniform Guidance](#) as applicable.

Matching contributions: Matching Contributions consist of cash, contributed goods and services, volunteer hours, and/or property raised and spent for the Project during the Period of Performance. Larger match ratios and matching fund contributions from a diversity of partners are encouraged and will be more competitive during application review.

Procurement: If the applicant chooses to specifically identify proposed Contractor(s) for Services, an award by NFWF to the applicant does not constitute NFWF's express written authorization for the applicant to procure such specific services noncompetitively. When procuring goods and services, NFWF recipients must follow documented procurement procedures which reflect applicable laws and regulations.

Publicity and acknowledgment of support: Award recipients will be required to grant NFWF the right and authority to publicize the project and NFWF's financial support for the grant in press releases, publications and other public communications. Recipients may also be asked by NFWF to provide high-resolution (minimum 300 dpi) photographs depicting the project.

Receiving award funds: Award payments are primarily reimbursable. Projects may request funds for reimbursement at any time after completing a signed agreement with NFWF. A request of an advance of funds must be due to an imminent need of expenditure and must detail how the funds will be used and provide justification and a timeline for expected disbursement of these funds.

Compliance requirements: Projects selected may be subject to requirements under the National Environmental Policy Act, Endangered Species Act (state and federal), and National Historic Preservation Act. Documentation of compliance with these regulations must be approved prior to initiating activities that disturb or alter habitat or other features of the project site(s). Applicants should budget time and resources to obtain the needed approvals. As may be applicable, successful applicants may be required to comply with additional Federal, state or local requirements and obtain all necessary permits and clearances.

Permits: Successful applicants will be required to provide sufficient documentation that the project expects to receive or has received all necessary permits and clearances to comply with any Federal, state or local requirements. Where projects involve work in the waters of the United States, NFWF strongly encourages applicants to conduct a permit pre-application meeting with the Army Corps of Engineers prior to submitting their proposal. In some cases, if a permit pre-application meeting has not been completed, NFWF may require successful applicants to complete such a meeting prior to grant award.

Federal funding: The availability of federal funds estimated in this solicitation is contingent upon the federal appropriations process. Funding decisions will be made based on level of funding and timing of when it is received by NFWF.

TIMELINE

Dates of activities are subject to change. Please check the Program page of the NFWF website for the most current dates and information (www.nfwf.org/chi-cal).

2020 Chi-Cal Funding Opportunity Webinar	June 10, 10:00 AM Central Time
Full Proposal Due Date	July 9, 10:59 PM Central Time
Review and Approval Period	July – November
Awards Announced	Early November

After project selection, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation staff will work with applicants to prepare grant agreements and other necessary paperwork, all of which will be completed electronically using the Easygrants system. Additional information about the grantee's organization and its finances may be solicited during this time. Please note the preparation of grant agreements will require approximately 4 to 6 weeks from the time the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation receives the additional required information from the grantee.

Once grant agreements are finalized, funds will typically be paid to grantees on a reimbursable basis. Funds may be advanced to qualified grantees on an as-needed basis.

WEBINARS

Fund partners will host a webinar on **June 10, 2020 at 10:00 AM Central Time**. The webinar will provide: additional information about funding priorities; in-depth review of the proposal narrative and highlighting priority project elements; examples of past projects; tips for submitting competitive proposals; and answers to participant questions. Prospective applicants are strongly encouraged to participate. Webinar participants can **register** by [clicking here](#).

HOW TO APPLY

All application materials must be submitted online through National Fish and Wildlife Foundation's Easygrants system.

1. Go to easygrants.nfwf.org to register in our Easygrants online system. New users to the system will be prompted to register before starting the application (if you already are a registered user, use your existing login). Enter your applicant information.
2. Once on your homepage, click the "Apply for Funding" button and select this RFP's "Funding Opportunity" from the list of options.
3. Follow the instructions in Easygrants to complete your application. Once an application has been started, it may be saved and returned to at a later time for completion and submission.

APPLICATION ASSISTANCE

A *Tip Sheet* is available for quick reference while you are working through your application. This document can be downloaded [here](#). Additional information to support the application process can be accessed on the NFWF website's "Applicant Information" page (www.nfwf.org/whatwedo/grants/applicants/Pages/home.aspx).

Program contacts below, please direct all questions to Traci Giefer:

Aislinn Gauchay
Program Director, Great Lakes
612-564-7284
Aislinn.Gauchay@nfwf.org

Traci Giefer
Program Manager, Great Lakes
612-564-7296
Traci.Giefer@nfwf.org

For issues or assistance with our online Easygrants system, please contact:

Easygrants Helpdesk

Email: Easygrants@nfwf.org

Voicemail: 202-595-2497

Hours: 9:00 am to 5:00 pm ET, Monday-Friday.

Include: your name, proposal ID #, e-mail address, phone number, program you are applying to, and a description of the issue.