

URBANWATERS

FEDERAL PARTNERSHIP

Restoring Urban Waters, Revitalizing Communities

AMBASSADOR TOOLKIT

The Urban Waters Ambassador: Connecting People to Their Local Urban Waters



Ambassador Toolkit Executive Summary

In 2011, the Urban Waters Federal Partnership was established to reconnect urban communities, particularly those that are overburdened or economically distressed, with their waterways to become stewards for clean urban waters. The UWFP is supported by 15 federal agencies, more than 28 nongovernmental organization, and more than 950 non-federal partners working in designated locations across the country.



The UWFP created the Urban Waters Ambassador program to accelerate and coordinate on-the-ground projects, promote community engagement and advance water and land protection and restoration. Ambassadors at the [UWFP locations](#) serve critically important roles as local coordinators, facilitators and leaders.

The Ambassador Toolkit includes information about the UWFP and the Ambassador position, providing:

- overview information on the Urban Waters Ambassador program;
- materials that can be shared with Urban Waters partners to recognize the benefits of the Ambassador role;
- templates, resources and information for current Ambassadors; and
- information on sustaining the Ambassador position and supporting Urban Waters projects.

Ambassador Toolkit Table of Contents



What is the Ambassador Toolkit?

This toolkit includes information about the Urban Waters Federal Partnership and the Ambassador position. The toolkit includes both standalone materials, such as fact sheets, that can be detached and comprehensive materials to educate current Ambassadors, recruit for candidates for new positions and support local leadership at UWFP locations.

The toolkit was updated in 2024 to reflect updated resources and showcase new UWFP successes.

The toolkit contains the following information:

I. GENERAL INFORMATION ON THE URBAN WATERS AMBASSADOR PROGRAM

1. The Urban Waters Ambassador Fact Sheet (new)
2. Program Resources and Contact Information (new)
3. Innovative Ambassador Models (new)
4. How Do Ambassadors Have an Impact? Quotes from the Field
5. Messaging “Taglines” for the Ambassador Position

II. RESOURCES AND TOOLS FOR AMBASSADORS

1. Urban Waters Partnership Workplan Template (updated)
2. Outreach Messages for Locations to Leverage Awards

III. SUSTAINING THE URBAN WATERS AMBASSADOR ROLE

1. The Urban Waters Ambassador: Ambassador Sustainability Planning
2. Accessing Non-federal Resources for the Urban Waters Program: Guide to Building Partnerships and Alliances (new)
3. Grant Writing Support Tips for Ambassadors and Urban Waters Partners

Urban Waters Ambassadors: Connecting Communities to their Local Urban Waters

The Urban Waters Federal Partnership created the Urban Waters Ambassador positions to accelerate and coordinate on-the-ground projects, promote community engagement and advance water and land protection and restoration.

Urban Waters Federal Partnership Ambassadors help urban communities — particularly those that are underserved and overburdened — **connect with and improve their local waterways and surrounding lands, making them a vital resource to help advance community revitalization, water quality and equity and environmental justice.**

Ambassadors are local staff from public and private sector organizations who serve as local coordinators, facilitators and leaders. They coordinate efforts between federal and state government agencies, Tribes, local municipalities, academic and private sector partners and local non-profits in Partnership locations.

Ambassadors develop annual workplans that identify local priorities, advance both federal missions and local needs and improve coordination and communication among partners.



ROLE OF THE AMBASSADOR

The Ambassador is the local **connector, convener and champion** in the watershed. Ambassadors typically have deep connections with historically disadvantaged communities and can **lead collaboration among federal, Tribal, state and local agencies, identifying community needs, achieving common goals and supporting on-the-ground projects** that align with the community's plan or vision, improve the watershed and benefit residents.

Benefits of an Ambassador:

- Strengthens ties within the community
- Increases local capacity
- Leverages resources and connects needs with funding opportunities
- Coordinates communities, federal and state agencies, NGOs and businesses at the watershed-level

The Ambassador:



Accelerates on-the-ground projects

Ambassadors accelerate and prioritize on-the-ground projects that are critical to improving water quality, restoring outdoor spaces and fostering community stewardship in urban watersheds. Ambassadors engage a wide network of stakeholders around particular issues, such as brownfields, resiliency and flooding, increasing capacity for effective projects.



Measures Performance and Success

Ambassadors measure and report results to drive future success. Ambassadors routinely review and report on progress to showcase the success of the program.



Builds Trust and Minimizes Conflict

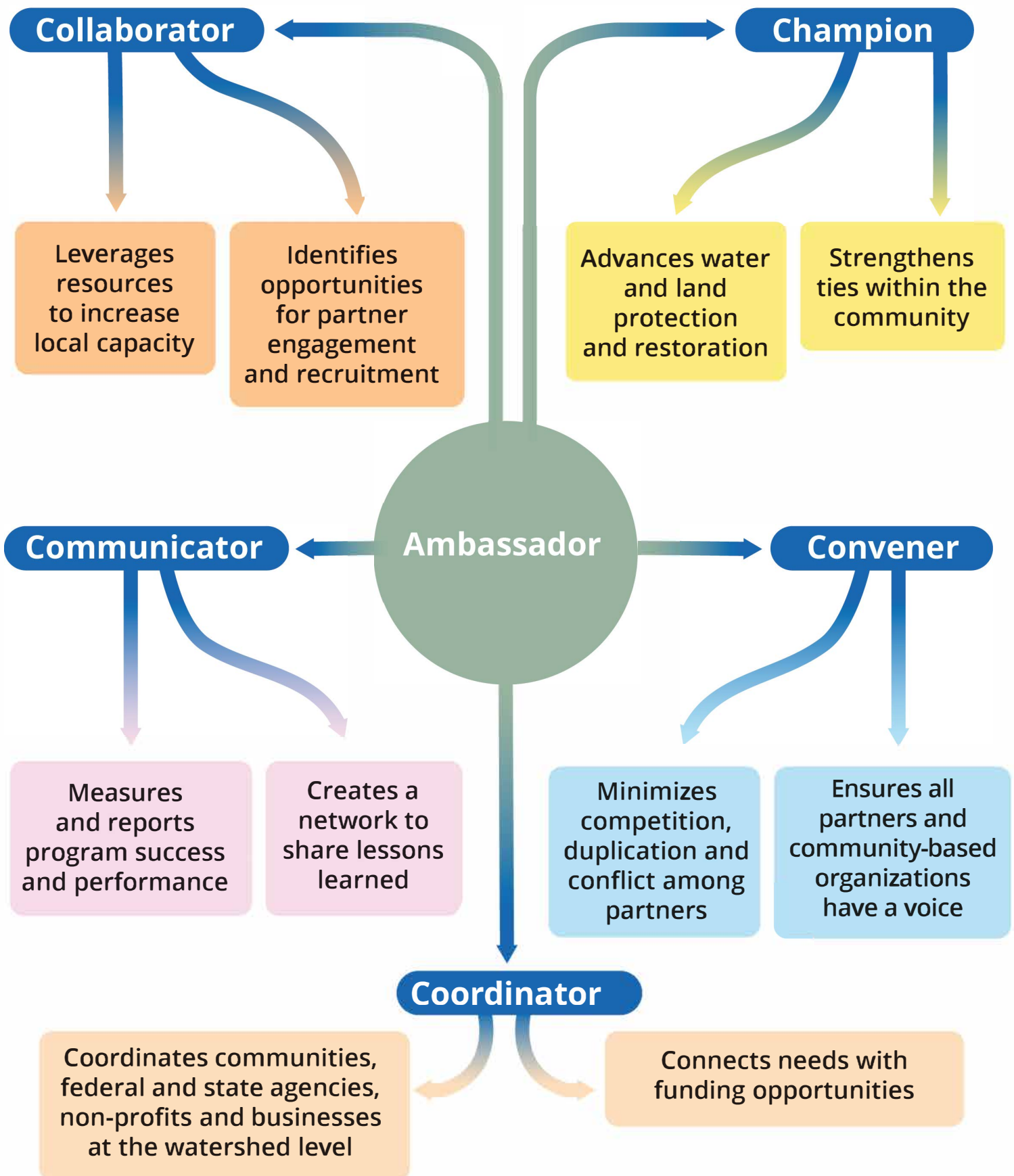
Ambassadors encourage transparency and network-building among local Partnership agencies and organizations. They help partners minimize competition, duplication, and conflict. Having a resilient group of partners increases the likelihood of a swift and amicable resolution.



Advances Local Priorities

Partnership projects reflect the needs of the watershed and its residents and can advance the goals of local government and community missions. Ambassadors serve as strategic leaders identifying federal and non-federal funding and coordination among partners.

ROLES OF THE URBAN WATERS AMBASSADOR



Program Contacts and Resources

The Environmental Protection Agency Headquarters Urban Waters Team Staff Members:

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Urban Waters Learning Network:

<https://urbanwaterslearningnetwork.org/>

Urban Waters Learning Network Mobilize peer-to-peer sharing site:

Join here: <https://urbanwaterslearningnetwork.org/join/>

Urban Waters Federal Partnership Mobilize peer-to-peer sharing site:

All active Urban Waters Ambassadors and Locations Leads can join the Urban Waters Federal Partnership Locations Mobilize Site by emailing:

urban-waters-federal-partnership-locations@groups.rivernetwork.org.

These Mobilize sites are spaces for Urban Waters Ambassadors and Leads to support each other and share best practices, inspiration, tips and ideas. Updates on events, activities and programs are also shared. Resources such as the Urban Waters newsletter, contact information for Ambassadors and leads, and call notes from the UWFP locations calls are uploaded to this site under Resources.

Additional Information on the UWFP

Urban Waters Federal Partnership Fact Sheet: https://www.epa.gov/sites/default/files/2021-03/documents/urban_waters_fact_sheet_2021_final.pdf

Urban Waters Federal Partnership Vision, Mission and Principles: <https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2014-06/documents/urbanwaters-visionv2012.pdf>

Urban Waters Framework for the Future:

<https://www.epa.gov/urbanwaterspartners/framework-future-urban-waters-federal-partnership-2021-partner-recommitment>

Urban Waters Partnership Handbook:

https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2016-07/documents/uw_partnership_handbook_v2k.pdf

Innovative Ambassador Models

The Ambassador position can be supported through a variety of host organizations, including local/state/federal agencies, universities or foundations. Through their critical work, Ambassadors have provided unique benefits across the country. Examples of their diverse contributions include the following:

- At the **Rio Reimagined – Rio Salado UWFP location in Greater Phoenix, Arizona**, the Ambassador is supported under an interagency agreement by and among the partners of the watershed: Maricopa County, the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community, the Salt River Project Agricultural Improvement and Power District, the Maricopa Association of Governments and Arizona State University. Arizona State University, through its University City Exchange, hosts the Ambassador position. The UWFP's ongoing efforts in restoring and revitalizing the Salt River have garnered national attention and praise from two U.S. Senators representing the area, even introducing legislation to support the Urban Waters Federal Partnership.
- At the **Northwest Indiana UWFP location**, the Ambassador is hosted by Purdue University, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service and the EPA. The Ambassador has initiated a variety of local projects, including (1) planting 10,000 trees and engaging 2,5000 volunteers in an effort to increase tree canopy in areas impacted by the Emerald Ash Borer through the CommuniTree program; (2) installing Indiana's first wheelchair-accessible canoe launches; and 3) educating more than 6,000 students and residents about local waterways and natural resources through watershed education programs, which featured paddling with Canoemobile.
- At the **Blue River UWFP location in Kansas City, Missouri**, the Ambassador is hosted by the Heartland Conservation Alliance, a local NGO. The Ambassador is leading new projects on reclaiming formerly abandoned sites and engaging new stakeholder groups in the watershed. Under the leadership of the Ambassador, Blue River Urban Waters Partners were awarded a \$5 million Missouri American Rescue Plan Act Stormwater Infrastructure grant. The Ambassador convened the following partners and helped to write the grant application: the Missouri Parks and Recreation Department; the City of Kansas City, MO; Jackson County, MO; the Mid-America Regional Council; and other nonprofits. The funded project seeks to restore 200-270 acres of riparian habitat along the Blue River, restore green infrastructure in three nodes along the Blue River corridor and plant 2,000-2,500 trees in neighborhoods and business districts adjacent to the corridor.
- At the **Green-Duwamish location in Seattle, Washington**, the Ambassador is supported by the U.S. Forest Service, the EPA Urban Waters Program and the EPA National Estuary Program through the Puget Sound Partnership, a Washington State agency charged with leading the recovery of the Puget Sound and its watersheds. The UWFP's workplan commits half of the Ambassador's time toward collaborating with partners with the Puget Sound Partnership and the EPA National Estuary Program.

How Do Ambassadors Have an Impact? Quotes from the Field

“You can think of our position as kind of a catalyst to get work going that community leaders, organizations and the state has started, but they keep running into barriers, and they just need that extra push. We are here to connect them to those resources; to catalyze the process; and to get that work going on the ground.” – [Natalie Johnson, Former Ambassador for the Northwest Indiana Area Partnership](#)

“[An element] of the Partnership's secret sauce is its own dedicated infrastructure for managing [its] efforts ... The Urban Waters Federal Partnership's solution is something called "Ambassadors," who are typically local employees of a nongovernmental organization or nearby federal agency assigned to work on a project at one of the Partnership locations for one to two years at anywhere from one-third to full-time.” – [Steve Kelman, Harvard University](#)

“[An Ambassador's] work includes Partnerships with local, state and federal agencies, businesses, nonprofits and philanthropies to clean up pollution; spur redevelopment of abandoned properties; promote new businesses; and provide parks and access for boating, swimming, fishing and community gatherings.” – [Service to America Medal finalist nomination](#)

“For us, the benefit in bringing an Ambassador on was capacity. All of our friends or partners had full time jobs already, so having somebody who was dedicated to convening and advancing the Partnership was really important to making progress.” – [Michael Galvin, Former Ambassador for the Patapsco Watershed/Baltimore Partnership](#)

“Without an Ambassador in a coordinating role, it would be very difficult to have continued momentum.” – [Michael Leff, Former Ambassador for the Delaware River Partnership](#)

“I, Eric Garcetti, as Mayor of the City of Los Angeles, do hereby commend and offer appreciation to Pauline Louie (former Los Angeles River Watershed Urban Waters Ambassador) and the Urban Waters Federal Partnership for the exceptional service to the City of Los Angeles in bringing new life to our Los Angeles River.” – [Eric Garcetti, mayor of the City of Los Angeles](#)

Messaging “Taglines” for the Ambassador Position

Purpose: *Many Ambassadors have voiced support for taglines or slogans for the Ambassador position to convey the role of the Ambassador quickly and succinctly. These taglines could serve to provide “branding” for the Ambassador position and could be used as part of Ambassador-specific materials, including the Ambassador fact sheet, other portions of this Toolkit and business cards. These tagline options have been sent in by Urban Waters stakeholders and could be provided for suggested use.*

- **Connecting People to their Local Urban Waters**
- **The Ambassador Is at the Heart of Every Urban Waters Partnership**
- **A Lifeline to Urban Waters**
- **Connecting Communities and Decision-Makers with their Urban Waters**
- **A Key to Unlocking Watershed Potential**
- **Bridging the Gap between River and Community**
- **Bridging People to their Local Waters**
- **Connecting People, Restoring Urban Lands and Water**
- **Urban Waters Ambassadors – Connecting People to their Urban Waters Since 2011**

Urban Waters Partnership Workplan Template



Summary: *This document serves as a Partnership workplan template for Urban Waters Federal Partnership) locations. It is intended to provide a model for a Partnership workplan approach to define goals, summarize priority projects and specify milestones. **You may modify the content and approach to optimize the plan for your Partnership.** Provided below are workplan options depicted by a yearly reporting structure or a three-five-year reporting structure. Workplans can also be organized by theme or topic that resemble the priorities of your Partnership.*

In the process of developing a workplan, key partners (federal, state and local government, Tribes, NGOs, community, academia, etc.) and the Urban Waters Ambassador should meet to outline priorities and projects that best align with the Partnership’s mission and goals. Once priorities and projects are agreed upon by key stakeholders, actions and initiatives should be documented in this workplan template to ensure outcomes are achieved and projects are completed.

A finalized workplan serves as a valuable resource to align and coordinate future projects, investments and funding opportunities. It serves as a resource to communicate back to partner agencies and the community the benefits of their participation. It also serves as a resource for Partnerships that may experience a leadership or Ambassador transition. Be sure to send your workplan to your Partnership lead and the EPA Headquarters Urban Waters team; the EPA will post it on urbanwaters.gov.

Urban Waters Partnerships operate in constantly changing environments; therefore, workplans should be regularly reviewed and updated if necessary.

Partnership workplan examples:

- [Anacostia River \(DC/MD\)](#)
- [Blue River \(MO\)](#)
- [Bronx & Harlem Rivers \(NY\)](#)
- [Caño Martín Peña \(PR\)](#)



Location: *[Insert Partnership/watershed name]*

Points of Contact: *[Insert name of Ambassador, federal lead, etc.]*

I. Background

The Urban Waters Federal Partnership seeks to “revitalize urban waters and the communities that surround them, transforming overlooked assets into treasured centerpieces and drivers of urban revival.”

This collaboration will:

- align federal government programs and investments in these communities;

- expand partnerships;
- build local capacity; and
- find innovative ways to communicate the environmental and economic potential of safe and clean urban waters.

*[Ambassadors: **Insert** an overview/description of the location's watershed. For example, "The 870-square-mile Los Angeles River Watershed includes the 51-mile-long Los Angeles River, with its headwaters in the Angeles National Forest to its discharge to the Pacific Ocean in Long Beach."]*

II. Partners and Partnership Structure

This workplan has been developed by partners working for the [**insert location name**] as part of the UWFP. It is intended to define goals, detail key partners, summarize priority projects and specify milestones. List partners:

Federal Agency Partners:

State Agency Partners:

Local Government Partners:

Nongovernmental Organizations/Community Organizations:

Private Sector/Academia/Foundations:

III. Accomplishments

The Ambassador worked throughout the year to strengthen and build partnerships with federal partners that will lay a foundation for the continuity of UWFP projects. Highlights included: *see example accomplishments on [page 4 of the Blue River UWFP workplan](#).*

IV. Overall Goals and Objectives

The [**insert location**] Urban Waters Partnership will work to protect, restore and revitalize urban water sources in [**insert city/region name**]. The Partnership will use the mission, vision and principles of the Urban Waters Federal Partnership to:

- *Promote clean waterways*
- *Reconnect citizens to their waterways*
- *Conserve water*
- *Promote access to clean and healthy water for everyone*
- *Promote economic revitalization and prosperity through existing networks of urban water resources*
- *Encourage community involvement and stewardship through active Partnerships*
- *Engage and hear the needs of the communities*
- *Measure results and evaluate factors to future success*

V. Initiatives (upcoming projects)

Given that Urban Waters Partnerships operate in a constantly changing environment, the focus of a workplan is subject to shift from a project-based workplan toward a theme-based workplan. Templates are provided below for a Partnership to set and track goals on an annual basis (Template 1), or the additional and supplemental workplan as a planning resource for a three- to five-year scope (Template 2).

Template 1: (workplan tracked annually)

[See example below]

Initiative 1

*[Ambassadors: **Insert** description/overview of project/vision]*

Federal Partners:

Other Partners/Stakeholders:

Year 1 – Initiative Activities:

- a.
- b.
- c.

Year 1 – Expected Outputs and Outcomes: *[Insert tangible achievements or milestones, aligned with the UWFP metrics below. Report on the metrics that are available.]*

Metrics:

Optional: Submit photos of applicable workplan activities to partnership leads and the EPA Headquarters team along with metrics.

Year 2 – Initiative Activities:

- a.
- b.
- c.

Year 2 – Expected Outputs and Outcomes:

Metrics:

Optional: Submit photos of applicable workplan activities to partnership leads and the EPA Headquarters team along with metrics.

Initiative 2
[Insert description/overview of project/vision]

Federal Partners:
Other Partners/Stakeholders:

Year 1 – Initiative Activities:
a.
b.
c.

Year 1 – Expected Outputs and Outcomes: *[Insert tangible achievements or milestones, aligned with the UWFP metrics below. Report on the metrics that are available.]*

Metrics:

Year 2 – Initiative Activities:
a.
b.
c.

Year 2 – Expected Outputs and Outcomes:

Metrics:

Optional: Submit photos of applicable workplan activities to partnership leads and the EPA Headquarters team along with metrics.

Initiative 2
[Insert description/overview of project/vision]

Federal Partners:
Other Partners/Stakeholders:

Year 1 – Initiative Activities:

- a.
- b.
- c.

Year 1 – Expected Outputs and Outcomes: *[Insert tangible achievements or milestones, aligned with the UWFP metrics below. Report on the metrics that are available.]*

Metrics:

Optional: Submit photos of applicable workplan activities to partnership leads and the EPA Headquarters team along with metrics.

Year 2 – Workplan Activities:

- a.
- b.
- c.

Year 2 – Expected Outputs and Outcomes: *[Insert tangible achievements or milestones, aligned with the UWFP metrics below. Report on the metrics that are available.]*

Metrics:

Optional: Submit photos of applicable workplan activities to partnership leads and the EPA Headquarters team along with metrics.

Option 2: (3-5-year workplan)

[See example below]

Workplan Activities: (1-3-year plan):

- a.
- b.
- c.

Expected Outputs and Outcomes (by the end of the 3-5-year plan) *[Insert tangible achievements or milestones, aligned with the UWFP metrics above. Report on the metrics that are available]*

Federal Partners:

Other Partners/Stakeholders:

Workplan Activities: (3-5 year plan):

- a.
- b.
- c.

Expected Outputs and Outcomes (by the end of the 3-5-year plan) *[Insert tangible achievements or milestones, aligned with the UWFP metrics above. Report on the metrics that are available]*

Federal Partners:

Other Partners/Stakeholders:

VI. Other Partnership Activities

Activities listed here are not required to be directly correlated to an initiative.

Project:

[Insert description/overview of project/vision]

Federal Partners:

Partners/Stakeholders:

Milestones:

VII. Additional Initiatives/Projects Suggested by *[insert location]*

These are initiatives that have been identified or suggested and should further be explored to determine viability.

The Ambassador, in working with their governance structure, should revise or update the workplan on an annual or semi-annual basis.

Option 1 Initiative Example

(from Bronx and Harlem River Watersheds UWFP Workplan):

 [\[Click here to see the full workplan.\]](#)

Initiative 1: Public Access Advancements through the Harlem River Greenway and Public Programming – Harlem River

Overview - Harlem River Greenway

The Harlem River Greenway is a 30-year-old vision to develop a complete system of bike/walking paths along the Harlem River, connecting community residents to the Harlem River and linking to other recreational bike/ped facilities in NYC and Westchester County. The Harlem River Greenway consists of a series of partner projects to improve public access and recreational resources, advance green infrastructure and habitat restoration, and community engagement.

The recently completed NYC Parks Harlem River Watershed and Natural Resources Management Plan for the Bronx recognized that access to the nine miles of River is severely limited and that meeting long expressed community desire by the Harlem River Working Group for a continuous greenway along the waterfront as well as improved connections from upland neighborhoods is a priority. Working through the Bronx and Harlem Rivers Urban Waters Federal Partnership and the New York-New Jersey Harbor & Estuary Program, Bipartisan Infrastructure Law funds will be used to support community engagement and planning services that will advance this work. These efforts will accelerate efforts to assess opportunities and implement bicycle and pedestrian improvements under New York City Department of Transportation's proposed Harlem River Greenway Implementation Plan, being done in conjunction with New York City Department of Parks & Recreation and New York City Department of Environmental Protection.

Harlem River On-Water Access

Access for boating on the Harlem River is limited and there are no boat houses or boat clubs on the Bronx side of the Harlem River. The State Park has created a dock during its recent renovation, and the Urban Waters Federal Partnership and Harlem River Working Group and Bronx Council for Environmental Quality have supported Wilderness Inquiry programs but there is potential to do more, possibly including additional events that introduce boating to the public, planning work, capacity building for local boat clubs to helping create infrastructure for human powered boat activities.

Partner 2023/2024 Plans

- NY-NJ Harbor & Estuary Program will support Harlem River Greenway focused community engagement and communication efforts using Bipartisan Infrastructure Law funding, in coordination with Harlem River Working Group, New York City Department of Transportation, and New York City Department of Parks & Recreation.
- NYC Parks will support the Economic Development Corporation and private developers in the advancement of the Mill Pond Park Expansion, Bronx Point Esplanade, Bankside Public Access Esplanades, 144th Street Park and Lower Concourse Redevelopment projects.
- NYC Parks will track projects completed to date and work with the UWFP to identify new priorities and

partners for implementation.

- The Bronx Council for Environmental Quality, Harlem River Working Group, and New York-New Jersey Harbor & Estuary Program will engage/inform New York City Department of Transportation's Harlem River Greenway Implementation Plan in conjunction with New York City Department of Parks & Recreation and New York City Department of Environmental Protection.
- The Bronx Council for Environmental Quality and the Harlem River Working Group will coordinate the Wilderness Inquiry events in October and an eels project to celebrate Roberto Clemente State Park's 50th Anniversary.
- Billion Oyster Project is creating an activity center at Mill Pond Park which will include a field station with oyster reef and education/program opportunities.

Partner and Project Needs

- Supporting public access on the Harlem River through programming and such resources as increasing capacity of local boat clubs/number of boat houses.
- Coordinating/communicating with Community Boards about the Harlem River Greenway visioning and programming.
- Coordinating with Westchester County contacts to advance cross-county communication and to understand connections to Harlem River habitat impacts.

Potential Urban Waters Support

- The Partnership can help create a map of access and other activities as a first step for understanding what the limitations (programming, capacity, and physical) are for creating new on water activities and possibly a desired network of sites.
- The Partnership can support inquiries in developing a boat house on the Harlem River

Involved Partners:

Federal Participants: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Geological Survey; U.S. Department of Transportation

Non-federal Partners/Stakeholders: New York-New Jersey Harbor & Estuary Program; Harlem River Working Group; Bronx Council for Environmental Quality; NYC Parks; NYC Department of Environmental Protection; NYC Economic Development Corporation; Randall's Island Park Alliance, New York Restoration Project

Years 1-2 Workplan Activities:

- The Ambassador will work with New York-New Jersey Harbor & Estuary Program to support community engagement and communications services through a grant program to support community-led programming and public engagement in assessing opportunities and implementing bicycle and pedestrian improvements under New York City's Department of Transportation's proposed Harlem River Greenway Implementation Plan.
- The Ambassador will support partner planned on-water programming, including the Wilderness

Inquiry, New York State Department of Conservation's Eels Project at Roberto Clemente and Bronx-based City of Water Day events.

- The Ambassador will inventory upcoming federal transportation funding opportunities and/or other current federal agency actions that can address greenway challenges.

Years 1-2 Key Milestones

- Project planning/internship recruitment – Spring 2023
- Student training & site monitoring – Summer 2023
- Internship reporting – Fall 2023
- Sherman Creek Advisory Council meetings – March-December 2023

Expected Outputs and Outcomes Years 1-2:

- Three-day training courses held during Summer 2023 to teach student interns how to implement the NNBF monitoring methodology.
- Intern presentations on NNBF project field experience.
- Data to demonstrate the capacity of NNBF.
- Final report of intern field experience and monitoring results.
- Advancement of more effective living shoreline projects throughout the watershed.
- Development of the next generation of environmental leaders.
- Review and development of a conceptual design for Sherman Creek Park wetland/shoreline restoration.

Option 2 Initiative Example

(from Rio Reimagined Watershed UWFP Workplan):

 [\[Click here to see the full workplan.\]](#)

Initiative 14: Invasive Species Removal/Revegetation

To support removal of invasive salt cedar and restore native vegetation to areas of the Gila and Salt rivers and to promote beneficial ecosystem management through fire management, two resolutions passed by the Gila River Indian Community Council will allow the Department of Environmental Quality and Bureau of Indian Affairs Pima Agency Fire Management to begin restoration work commencing in the Fall of 2017. Resolution GR-104-17 approves the implementation of the fuel reduction and native plant communities restoration project and resolution GR-105-17 approves the Pima Agency's programmatic burn plan for piles.

These two resolutions will be utilized to remove portions of the Gila and Salt rivers of salt cedar, re-plant native plants in their place, and burn or distribute the left-over organic material to the Community. The areas of the Gila and Salt rivers that will be restored are located within Districts 6 and 7 of the Gila River Indian Community. The focus of the removal and revegetation will be areas of significant dense stands of salt cedar along the Gila River just east of St. Johns, and westward to the confluence with the Salt River, and the lower Salt River starting at the Pee Posh wetlands down to the confluence with the Gila River.

Involved Partners: Gila River Indian Community - Department of Environmental Quality and Bureau of Indian Affairs – AZ Pima Agency, Fire Management

Milestones: Resolution adopted October 2017

Outreach Messages for Locations to Leverage Awards

Objectives

The objectives of providing Ambassadors with sample outreach messages are to: 1. Leverage support from local decisionmakers for Partnership projects; 2. Encourage UWFP locations to apply for and be selected for other local environmental and sustainability awards; and 3. Generate interest from new local stakeholders to be involved in the Partnership's work. An overarching goal is to show how committed partners can improve America's waterways and the surrounding communities and builds trust among all entities.

Highlighting the following UWFP honors and awards in outreach messages can help to generate further support:

- [Sammies People's Choice Award](#)
- [National Arbor Day Foundation Awards Finalist](#)
- [U.S. Forest Service Chief's Honor Award](#)
- [Governor's Award for Environmental Excellence](#) - Northwest Indiana
- [NPCA's 10 under 40](#) - Los Angeles River

Sample messaging

The Urban Waters Federal Partnership – including federal and local partners – have received numerous honors and awards over the past few years. Across the nation, the Urban Waters Federal Partnership is working with federal agencies, state and local governments, neighborhood associations and nonprofit organizations to bring positive change to diverse urban areas, from the Bronx River to the Middle Rio Grande to the Los Angeles River. The Partnership works in underserved communities through public-private partnerships to clean up and revitalize urban waterways and surrounding lands.

The positive impact of the Federal Partnership is reflected in the range of awards received. Most notably, the Urban Waters Federal Partnership won the Service to America Medal "People's Choice" Award. On September 27, 2017, the nonprofit Partnership for Public Service announced the award, sometimes referred to as the "Oscars of Government Service." Out of 430 nominees, the Urban Waters Federal Partnership was chosen by popular vote for making "the most admirable contribution to the American people."

Other awards recognize specific successes of the Federal Partnership. For example, the U.S. Forest Service Chief's Honor Award recognized the Federal Partnership's achievements to advance national priorities, address the needs and challenges faced by our forests and grasslands, and meet the demands of citizens. In January 2018, the Partnership was also selected as an Arbor Day Foundation Headwaters Award finalist, an award that celebrates innovative programs supporting the improvement of water quality and quantity through forestry activities.

On a regional level, locations have received multiple awards. For instance, the Los Angeles River Partnership has been recognized for "[exceptional service to the City of Los Angeles](#)" and the Northwest Indiana Partnership recently received an award for its [Hansen Park restoration project](#).

These awards attest to the success of the Partnership to reconnect 46 million citizens to their local urban waters and improve their waterways, resulting in educational, recreational, environmental, economic and health benefits in communities across the U.S. Here in *[location name]*, partners have achieved many successes including: *[provide locations specific examples]*.

This award-winning program continues to gain support as more local stakeholders continue to join the Urban Waters movement. This is a movement, not a moment! *[Add location-specific accomplishments and upcoming priorities of interest]* So please join the *[Add location name]* Urban Waters Federal Partnership as we need your support to continue to inspire new clean water stewards and engage citizens to improve the quality of their urban waters and the communities surrounding them.

The Urban Waters Ambassador:

Ambassador Sustainability Planning

Purpose: *This document discusses transition and funding approaches to help ensure continuity of the Ambassador position. This guidance seeks to help local Partnerships find staffing or funding for the Ambassador role. The diverse approaches to sustain the Ambassador position are explained below. To support the longevity of the Urban Waters Ambassador position over many years, local governments, state governments, academia, foundations and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) are encouraged to be actively engaged and/or support a leadership role.*

Background on Ambassador Funding

When the Urban Waters Federal Partnership was founded, federal partners provided seed money to establish a network of Ambassadors at UWFP locations. The current leadership model for an Urban Waters Partnership location can take several forms, ranging from federal support for a single Ambassador position to several co-leads sharing the responsibilities of the Ambassador position. This network allowed Ambassadors to build relationships and capacity to further engage state and local agencies and other organizations in the Partnership.

Various Models of Ambassador Leadership

As UWFP locations plan for transition, they can look to other UWFP locations that have successfully transferred Ambassador responsibilities to new partners. Several UWFP locations that have successfully made this transition include the Los Angeles River Watershed (CA) and Bronx and Harlem River Watersheds (NY). Details on how these locations transitioned to a new funding model are below.

Local Partners Fund and Support the Ambassador Position (Los Angeles River Watershed)—The Los Angeles River Partnership, made up of over 40 government and community partner organizations, welcomed their first Urban Waters Ambassador in the summer of 2012. The Los Angeles River Ambassador was an employee of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and, after four years, returned to their responsibilities at HUD. Due to the notable success of the Los Angeles River Partnership under an Ambassador's leadership, local partners stepped in to fund and sustain the Urban Waters Ambassador position. An incoming Ambassador was identified to fulfill the Ambassador function and responsibilities, and the position was then funded by local field offices of the U.S. Department of the Interior-National Park Service and the U.S. Department of Agriculture - Forest Service, with support from The Nature Conservancy. The incoming Ambassador worked with the original Ambassador for several months prior to starting, ensuring a smooth transition. When the second Los Angeles Ambassador moved on to a new position within the National Park Service years later, a new Ambassador was welcomed into the role through the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' LA District. The City of Los Angeles and local partners are extremely supportive of the new and continued leadership of the Los Angeles River Ambassador, noting how the role enhances the region's ability to convene stakeholders and execute projects to revitalize the watershed.

Transition from Co-Leads to an Ambassador (Bronx & Harlem River Watersheds)—Since the Partnership's inception in 2011, this location was co-led by the U.S. Department of the Interior/U.S. Geological Survey and the EPA. In January 2017, the first full-time Ambassador was hired to serve the Bronx & Harlem River Watershed. The EPA provided funds to the New York-New Jersey Harbor &

Estuary Program for the Ambassador position, and USGS also contributes funding to the Ambassador position. The Ambassador is an employee of the New York-New Jersey Harbor & Estuary Program.

Transition Planning for Outgoing and Incoming Ambassadors to Sustain Ambassador Responsibilities and Ensure Continuity

Currently, most Ambassador positions are funded by federal agency partners. Transitions of this position may happen on occasion due to a change in funding sources or the departure of an Ambassador. If this happens, a transition plan that clearly outlines the status of projects and key partners to either maintain the Ambassador position or temporarily delegate roles to other partners should be developed. Leadership or funding transitions should seek to maintain the Partnership's activities, an active Ambassador and local partner involvement.

To transition leadership, partners should follow a thorough planning process. Partners in the transition planning process can include state or local agencies, NGOs, community organizations, academia and businesses.

Transitioning to a new leadership model may take up to one year; at a minimum the Partnership should plan six months in advance of the transition to negotiate a transition process. This helps ensure that in the instance an Ambassador position is not funded the key functions are picked up by other partners until funding becomes available. Identifying clear goals for the Partnership and selecting partners to fulfill those goals will ensure that the Ambassador's functions are sustained. Check-in meetings on leadership transitions should occur regularly since unforeseen shifts in funding and staffing can happen over a short timeframe. Examples are shared below.

During the transition planning process, one organization or agency may take responsibility for all the Ambassador's functions. It is possible that multiple partners can assume the Ambassador's functions, in a shared model where partners agree on certain functions and work together to ensure continuity of the Partnership's initiatives.

Documentation of the transition process is recommended. Creation of a transition plan, which outlines objectives and goals from transition meetings, responsible stakeholders and priorities, will be a useful reference document for those involved with leadership duties and for UWFP stakeholder awareness as well.

Transitioning to local agencies and/or other organizations being responsible for leadership and/or Ambassador funding can increase ownership of and involvement in UWFP projects. As new members become involved in leadership roles, engage other members and bring new parties to the table, an increased number of individuals will have a stake in seeing Ambassador functions performed successfully, thus facilitating a greater impact (e.g., foundations may align their missions with Partnership Workplans).

Accessing Non-federal Resources for the Urban Waters Program: Guide to Building Partnerships and Alliances

Introduction

The mission of the Urban Waters Federal Partnership is to help urban and metropolitan areas, particularly those that are underserved or economically distressed, connect with their waterways and work to improve them. The focus of the UWFP has been on creating bridges among entities to develop strong partnerships to serve the mutual goals of all participants.

UWFP partners are evaluating best approaches and practices for funding their projects and growing partnerships. With the desire to expand their programs and local partnership work, diverse sources for funding are needed. Diversified funding that includes federal, state, local, foundation, nonprofit and business sources will support the strength and sustainability of the UWFP locations.

This how-to guide contains best practices for accessing non-federal resources from UWFP partners, foundations, philanthropic corporations and other non-governmental organizations that have experience in obtaining or awarding non-federal funding or in-kind contributions. This guide was developed based on interviews and discussions with several such organizations. We gratefully acknowledge input from Carrie Clingan of the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, and former and current Urban Waters Ambassadors including Darryl Haddock of the West Atlanta Watershed Alliance, Matt Chapman of Grand Rapids Whitewater, Jill Erickson of the Heartland Conservation Alliance and Rob Pirani, Senior Director for Engagement and Policy of the Hudson River Foundation and Director of the NY-NJ Harbor & Estuary Program and Clay Hiles, Special Advisor for the Hudson River Foundation.



Figure 1: Mystic River Watershed. Photo courtesy of the EPA.

Purpose

This guide describes best practices for finding and applying for non-federal resources to fund the variety of urban waterway restoration projects and the Ambassador position. It builds upon the success the UWFP locations have already achieved in accessing non-federal resources.

Examples of Government Encouraging the Leveraging of Non-federal Funding for Restoration

Some Urban Waters Federal Partnership agencies have been exploring ways to support efforts to seek non-federal funding. For example, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development explored how to encourage communities to leverage non-federal resources through several of its offices. HUD's Office of Community Planning and Development issued a report, ["Scaling Solutions: A How-to Guide for Unleashing the Potential for Public-](#)

[Philanthropic Partnerships](#),” which summarizes multiple case studies that demonstrate strategies for success and the role of philanthropies.

Local governments are also pursuing non-federal funding. An example is the City of Toledo and their ongoing work on [brownfield site redevelopment](#). They explored multiple sources of funding for brownfield site redevelopment at the Overland Industrial Park in Toledo, Ohio. The focus of the project shifted to include revitalization of the community surrounding the property with the assistance of the Toledo Community Foundation, the University of Toledo and other partners.¹ The city continues to draw on partnerships for growing uses of the site and developing the surrounding communities.^{2,3}

Types of Resources

Foundations: Foundations are entities often organized as non-profit corporations or charitable trusts that are created with the purpose of making grants for charitable purposes. Foundations often offer grants through requests for proposal processes. Hundreds of nonprofit foundations exist with varying missions, and many focus on building and improving communities. Many metropolitan areas also have community foundations which can serve as a central grant-making organization or as a conduit to smaller foundations. Examples of community and local foundations include:

- The [Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta](#) serves as the philanthropic center for the 23-county Atlanta region. Some of their grant opportunities focus on community development and education.
- Grand Rapids has tapped into local foundations and businesses to assist in a major legacy conservation effort to restore 127 acres of its urban waters. The project is estimated to have a robust economic impact of \$15-19 million annually, bring more than 500,000 visitors to the river per year and create 80-100 new jobs. Grand Rapids Whitewater, the lead Urban Waters Partnership organization, secured \$4.4 million in new public and foundation funding for the restoration efforts of the Grand River. The restoration project has secured private sector resources from more than 10 organizations and foundations.
- Online resources, such as the [Foundation Center](#), can be useful tools to locate community foundations and information about their goals and interests. Such services often charge fees for the information. Many public libraries subscribe to the Foundation Center and provide free access.

Businesses: Business commitment to conserving, protecting, and restoring water in business operations and the environment is growing. Identify which corporations have corporate responsibility goals that align with your mission, and consider what their benefit will be, e.g., demonstrating leadership in the cleanup efforts. Examples of businesses supporting urban waters work include:

¹ https://www.epa.ohio.gov/portals/30/Brownfield_Conference/docs/Presentations/4-Diversifying%20the%20BF%20Portfolio.pdf

² <http://www.toledocf.org/news/2018/09/12/home-news/support-of-toledo-s-solar-project-will-reinvigorate-the-overland-neighborhood/#.XKy8iFVKiM8>

³ A cautionary note that all federal employees are prohibited from fundraising for their specific projects (see Office of Government Ethics summary). Fundraising costs for the purposes of meeting the Federal program objectives are allowable with prior written approval from the Federal awarding agency; 2 CFR 200.442(a). This rule does not apply to non-federal organizations involved in the UWFP partnerships. All parties must be cognizant of any possible conflicts of interest.

- The native trout habitat restoration project at Pine Tree Brook in Milton, Massachusetts, near Boston, found funding through the River Network’s [Business for Water Stewardship Project Bank](#). The Massachusetts Corporate Wetland Restoration Program and Trout Unlimited represented business interests that supported the project.
- The West Atlanta Watershed Alliance secured a large grant from the [Coca-Cola Foundation](#) after a long period of relationship building and discussions about goals and outcomes that favor both partners.

Universities: Universities are active members of Urban Waters Partnerships and, along with non-governmental organizations, have signed a statement of support to advance the Urban Waters mission. Universities can provide UWFP partners with access to technical assistance, facilities and staff that can advance UWFP projects. Several sites have university-hosted Ambassadors, including the interim Ambassador for the Rio Reimagined Partnership through Arizona State University. In the Patapsco River Partnership, the University of Maryland is a very active partner via its Sea Grant Extension Watershed Protection and Restoration Program; and most recently the University of the District of Columbia began hosting the Anacostia Ambassador under its [C² Equity Academy](#).

State and local entities: There are a variety of funds that Urban Waters partners have accessed at the state and local level. Examples include the [Supplemental Environmental Project](#) and the EPA’s State Revolving Fund program. In 2016, the Caño Martín Peña Urban Waters location secured SRF funding for the development of infrastructure projects that include green infrastructure interventions and comprehensive stormwater planning

Spotlight: The EPA State Revolving Funds

The [EPA’s Clean Water State Revolving Fund](#) program is a federal-state partnership that provides low-cost financing to communities for a wide range of water quality infrastructure projects, including municipal wastewater facilities, nonpoint source pollution control, decentralized wastewater treatment systems, stormwater runoff mitigation, green infrastructure, estuary protection and water reuse.

CWSRF eligible entities include:

- Municipalities, intermunicipal, interstate, or State agencies
- Nonprofit entities
- Private, for-profit entities
- Watershed groups
- Community groups
- Homeowners Associations
- Individuals

This list of State CWSRF Program Contacts [webpage](#) provides links to each state’s SRF program; each state’s SRF webpage walks you through the specific state’s guidance and provides steps to apply.

Contact information for the EPA Regional Office CWSRF Contacts can be found [here](#).

for Caño Martín Peña. Such plans include the development of a baseball field that will serve as water detention during community flooding events. The funding also helped in the development of a Comprehensive Infrastructure Master Plan.

Innovative funding mechanisms: Urban Waters Ambassadors and stakeholders can utilize alternative sources of financing to generate more revenue for necessary water quality improvement projects. This section highlights a selection of examples and case studies of several types of programs that are used across the country to generate revenue specifically for water and aquatic habitat restoration efforts.

Tax Options:

Property Tax/General Fund

Communities can fund stormwater management through residential property taxes paid into the general funds. Though appropriated for specific purposes through the budget process, general funds are relatively consistent from year to year and may be used by local governments for any legal purpose. Tax revenue is generally very consistent from year to year and usually contributes the greatest amount to municipal general funds.

Conservation Sales Tax

A conservation sales tax on all taxable goods is one mechanism that can be used for funding water quality improvement projects. Through this mechanism, the monies collected are deposited into an account to be used expressly for restoration purposes.

Example: State of Maryland

Maryland implements a pooled, flat fee to fund wastewater treatment plant and septic tank upgrades. The Bay Restoration Fund is a Maryland state fund dedicated to upgrading wastewater treatment plants with enhanced nutrient removal technology. This fund is divided into two subsets, the Wastewater Treatment Plant Fund and the Onsite Disposal Fund, and each subset has its own revenue source. The Wastewater Treatment Plant Fund is supported by monthly fees charged to residential dwellings with sewer bills and onsite sewage disposal, residential dwellings with sewage holding tanks that pay water bills, and commercial and industrial users. The Bay Restoration Fee generates about \$100 million annually from wastewater treatment plant users.

Special Parcel Tax

Property owners are taxed per square foot of impervious surface on parcels. The tax revenue is collected along with property taxes. The dollars can be held by a newly created program governed by the municipality or county.

Example: Los Angeles County

In November 2018, Los Angeles County voters passed a referendum allowing for the creation of the Safe Clean Water Program funded by a parcel tax of 2.5 cents per square foot of impervious surface. The objective of this program is to increase water supply, improve water quality, and invest in the local community. The money is held by the Safe Clean Water Program which is governed by Los Angeles County. The funds are then divided between the Los Angeles County Flood Control District, municipalities within the District, and nine regional programs that are run by watershed area steering committees. The funds can be used for eligible projects, including infrastructure development, stormwater monitoring and approaching, and investments in new technology that increase water capture and decrease runoff pollution.

Stormwater fees

A stormwater utility fee is paid by a customer to convey stormwater from their properties, similar to a fee employed by a water or sewer utility. If a city has the legal authority to establish a stormwater utility fee, the revenue generated can be used to fund programs and activities that improve surface water quality, help meet regulatory requirements and address a variety of critical stormwater and drainage management needs. Stormwater utility fees are based on the area of impervious surface, or land that does not absorb water (pavements, roofs, sidewalks, etc.) on a customer's parcel. The revenue is held by the local government stormwater utility and may be collected on a utility bill, a standalone bill, or a property tax bill. The local government stormwater utility may be part of a municipality, county or regional authority. Spending of stormwater revenue must be done within jurisdictional boundaries for the entity that generates the revenue.

Example: Newton, Massachusetts

The City of Newton established a stormwater utility fee in 2006. The fee generates revenue for the city to manage and upgrade stormwater infrastructure protect nearby natural waterbodies (e.g., Charles River and Crystal Lake), provide technical assistance with stormwater management issues and provide educational programs for residents and schools.

License Plates

Many states offer specialty license plates that help fund environmental programs. In Maryland, drivers have the option of purchasing Chesapeake Bay-themed license plates for their vehicles. License plate sales at the dealerships, tag and title agencies, and state Motor Vehicle Administration branches, are directed toward the Chesapeake Bay Trust Fund. Of the \$20 that a customer spends on the license plates, \$10 is kept by the MVA, and the other \$10 is directed to the Trust Fund. Dollars collected by the Chesapeake Bay Trust Fund are distributed in the form of grants for projects that improve the water quality of the Bay.

Income Tax Check-Off

Income tax check-off programs allow an eligible organization to appear on an individual tax form and for the taxpayer to donate a portion of their income tax refund to a cause of their choice. In Maryland, the organization that contributes to water quality improvement is listed as the Chesapeake Bay and Endangered Species Fund. The funds raised from the tax check-off program are split evenly between the Chesapeake Bay Trust and the Maryland Department of Natural Resources.

Watershed Improvement Districts

Another source of revenue for funding investments in green infrastructure and other water remediation technologies is the creation of a watershed improvement district. In this case, funding is sourced from a special property tax on all properties within the watershed. A WID allows for several options for a governance structure. The board of county commissioners can exercise their powers in the district, create watershed improvement commissions or delegate their powers to the watershed improvement district. The proceeds of a WID can be used for a broad range of public purposes, including constructing stormwater infrastructure. In addition, the mechanism allows local residents to obtain expanded services that they want at a price they are willing to pay.

Bond Mechanisms

General Obligation bonds

General obligation bonds are backed by the general revenue of the issuing municipality. GO bonds rely on taxation and involve the municipality pledging its tax revenues to pay the interest and principal on the debt as it matures. The issuer of general obligation bonds guarantees the repayment of debt via any means necessary. It can raise taxes, issue another round of bonds, or even sell physical assets, called collateral, to collect funds. GO bonds can be secured through ad valorem property taxes, which are proportionate to the estimated value of the goods or transaction concerned. Rules on how ad valorem taxes may be levied on property vary by state.

Due to the nature of the repayment, GO bonds typically require voter approval for issuance and are the most secure form of municipal debt from the perspective of a bondholder. Voter approval is achieved through a majority vote in a bond referendum. In addition to voter approval, general obligation bonds must satisfy any substantive or procedural requirements contained in the agency's governing statute. All communities can issue GO bonds for any public purpose pertaining to their local government and affairs.

Revenue bonds

Another type of municipal bond, revenue bonds can be issued by state or local governments for the purpose of issuing bonds for facility construction. In the water sector, these bonds often rely on the revenue stream from a water utility for repayment. Generally, state constitutions or statutes will give utilities the authority to issue revenue bonds, but only for certain purposes. Due to the necessity of the services that water utilities provide, it is common for utility revenue bonds to pledge their rate setting authority as the security behind this type of debt. There is no physical collateral pledged to the lender as there is with GO bonds, and no promise to use tax money. Water and sewer revenue bonds are issued with the purpose of financing upgrades to water utility and sanitation facilities. Debt service is provided from revenue collected from usage rates and connection fees.

Environmental Impact Bonds

An Environmental Impact Bond is a relatively new type of financing tool that provides up-front capital from private investors for environmental project. Unlike municipal bonds, it employs a Pay-for-Success model that conditions payback to issuers on project performance. Following construction and evaluation, the issuer – the public agency or private institution leading the project – repays the investor an agreed upon amount depending on the outcome of the program. In this way an EIB allows for risk-sharing: if a project underperforms, the issuer receives a performance payment from investors. If the project overperforms, the issuer pays the investors an agreed-upon total that matches cost savings from the project impact on water quality. This approach matches impact investors with municipalities planning environmental resilience projects, such as the construction of green infrastructure.

EIBs are tied to a firm, Quantified Ventures, that structures the bond and has been leading EIBs in states and municipalities throughout the country. Washington D.C.'s not-for-profit water utility, DC Water, was the first entity to use an EIB to fund green infrastructure to manage stormwater runoff. Structured like a traditional tax-free bond, the EIB allows for risk associated with a given infrastructure project to be transferred from the bond issuer, DC Water, to the investors, in this case, Goldman Sachs and the Calvert Foundation. The EIB funded 25 acres of green infrastructure as part of DC Water's Clean Rivers Project, which aims to reduce runoff into combined sewer systems and combined sewer overflows. The project reduced stormwater runoff by almost 20%, evaluated at to be within the anticipated performance range set at the onset of the project.



Figure 2: WAWA held an MLK Service Day that engaged community in rejuvenation efforts. Photo courtesy of WAWA.

Quantified Ventures also worked with Atlanta’s Department of Watershed Management to help structure an EIB to fund green infrastructure and much of the funds will be applied to the current Proctor Creek UW Partnership. The EIB will help finance six green infrastructure projects in the Proctor Creek Watershed to manage stormwater, reduce local flooding, alleviate water quality impacts, increase access to green space and create local green jobs. EIBs are an innovative, outcomes-based financing as a tool for the public municipal bond markets.

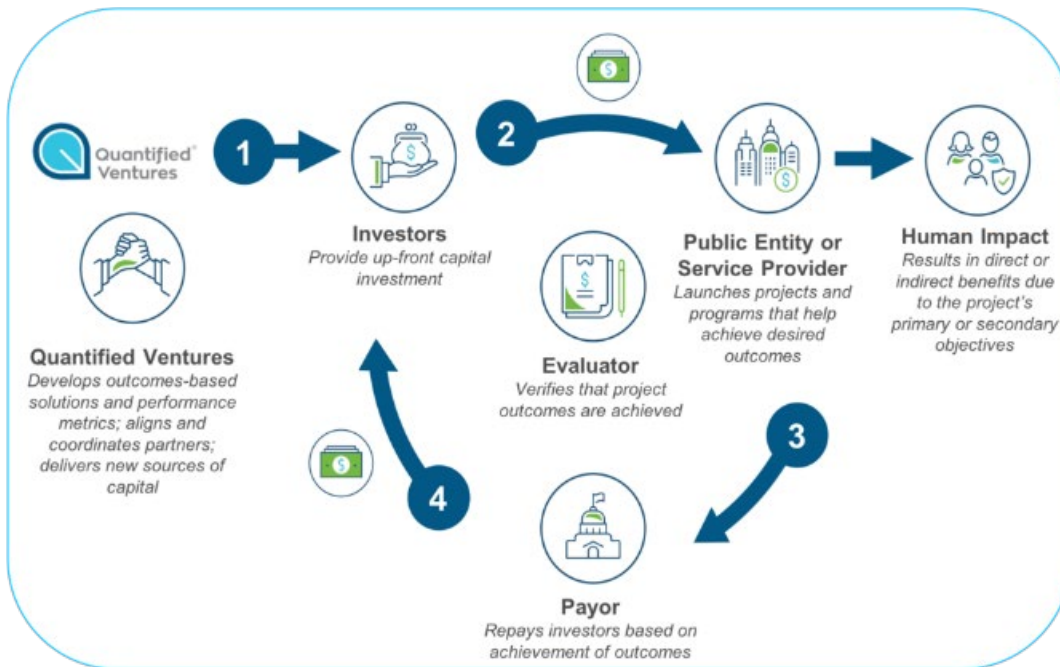


Figure 3: The Environmental Impact Bond (EIB) Financing Mechanism. Photo courtesy of Quantified Ventures.

How to Approach Funding Sources

Once possible funding sources are identified, take these steps to be prepared to approach them for funding. Accessing funds, technical assistance or staff resources provided by foundations, businesses or universities requires a variety of sustained efforts.

1) Understand the Value of the Urban Waters Program

A key step in approaching organizations about grants or other types of support is knowing and being able to persuasively communicate the value of your Urban Waters Partnership and the Ambassador position to local, state and regional organizations. Locations are unique and vary by watershed needs, communities and partner organizations. Knowing what the Ambassador contributes and the types of projects and contributions that are valued by partner organizations helps identify which funds to pursue and shapes communications to funders.

2) Gather Information About the Funding Source

Next, research the foundation, business or academic unit that has potential to be a good fit with your project.

- Understand the mission and objectives of the funding source and check that your goals align with their goals, e.g., the Hudson River Foundation prefers to support environmental justice communities.
- Realize that foundations can be constrained in what they can offer because of constraints placed on them by their donors or board of directors.
- During this process, determine whether any possible conflicts of interest might exist between any of the parties.
- Consider if engaging with other organizations to partner on the approach could make the pitch stronger.

Jill Erikson, formerly of the Heartland Conservation Alliance, recently reached out to a large local foundation for the first time. She researched the foundation to learn their goals and what they fund. “It’s like dating,” Jill said, “and I was looking for a long-term relationship.” She learned that they like to fund grants that were \$100K+, and that was consistent with Alliance goals. She also explored what geographic areas and demographic preferences they funded in previous grants awarded.

3) Develop a Funding Plan and Build Relationships

In collaboration with committed partners, develop a plan to pursue funding opportunities. The plan should include strategies, key contacts and timelines for building a relationship and securing funding or other resources. The organizations included in this plan should be selected intentionally and have alignment with the UWFP.

Relationship building with potential funding sources should happen before there is any money or other support on the table. For multi-partner collaborative projects, relationships need to be fostered among all the partners. This process requires an investment of time, but the payoff can be substantial.

When evaluating the opportunities, consider convening a community meeting and discussing current goals and needs of the community. After refining plans, determine if current planning efforts can gather data on the availability of funds from both community and national foundations. A point person can be assigned to evaluate the areas of overlap between the UW workplan and the goals of the foundations, businesses and academia.

- Concrete steps to building a relationship include: go to potential funders’ meetings and events; support their initiatives; add items to their agendas (great opportunity to present information to them); and offer to serve as a delegate at conferences.
- Leverage existing connections or local partnerships, e.g., local water department officials, to garner support of the UWFP. These relationships could lead to letters of support that are helpful for grant applications.
- Get to know the foundation program officer and staff by contacting them

Darryl Haddock of the West Atlanta Watershed Alliance recently courted a large, nationwide corporation based in Atlanta for funding local projects. Darryl engaged with them for a long time and learned about their dynamic philanthropy that emphasizes water issues. He attended community events they sponsored where he sought out company executives and board members to introduce himself, even though there was no money on the table at the time. Darryl also volunteered at the events. He brought them many projects, trying to find a good fit for their high-profile philanthropy image. For example, cleaning up trash from rivers where most of the trash is their product is a negative image. Eventually, Darryl obtained a \$400,000 grant that included activities to divert plastics out of the water stream.

directly. Be judicious and authentic in contacting them with questions; unimportant calls can be off-putting to busy people.

- Structure your funding activities with a long-term approach of finding funds.

4) Prepare to Approach Potential Funders

Build case statements. The case statement describes applicant's needs—how you'll solve it; why you are the best to do that; how is your organization and your project different from others who are applying for funding—and your timeline, costs, activities and outcomes. Back everything up with credible citations and sources (e.g., CDC health statistics). The case statement should reflect the partnership and intention and ability to coordinate activities. The statement should tell a compelling story that captures the reviewers' interest.

- Always know your own needs and have case statements ready so when someone makes an offer on short notice, you'll know which needs they might be able to fill. For example, a funder might give you a few days' notice to let them know what you might do with a \$5,000 donation.
- Document your operating expenses and note that administrative expenses need to be less than 20 percent of your total budget to be considered acceptable as a nonprofit. Staff time can be split between time spent on projects and time spent doing administrative work to keep administrative costs down.
 - It is very common for foundations to fund specific projects. Once projects are funded, typically over half of that funding is for staff hours. In the case of the UWFP, staff hours could be allocated to the Ambassador position.

5) Dive in and Approach Them

Plan well for the first meeting with a potential funder and treat it like a job interview. Determine if an in-person or virtual first encounter is best. You need to research the company or foundation and be prepared with specific questions to ask them.

- The delivery of your message is important. Consider getting training in public speaking. Use the Urban Waters network for support in developing presentations if needed.
- Explicitly state your mission and goals. Speak clearly about their needs and the fit between you in that context. Don't write a grant for a project you can't deliver.
- Deliver your prepared case statement that speaks to the interests of the funding source. Be honest about what your Partnership is, what you can do and what you will be using the funds for.

Tips for grant applications:

- *Review all materials provided by the funding source and follow instructions exactly.*
 - *Check that your project and application meet all criteria required by the funding.*
 - *Be thoughtful in contacting the funding source directly, calling with questions and not calling just for the sake of calling.*
 - *Plan to have all requirements for submission, such as registration numbers, in advance so you can meet deadlines.*
 - *Check your math on project costs before submitting.*
-

- Stay on top of deadlines with grant administrators, stay in touch with them, and do exactly what they ask you to do including following their reporting requirements, such as adhering to page limits.

Best Practices for Success

To leverage funding from non-federal sources for project success, consider these key elements.

- *Take time to build trust in the community.*

Start small with your initial project activities and short-term goals; the major project activities and accomplishments will come later in the project period. Initially, focus on continuing to build relationships with the community and your partners on a personal level. For example, schedule and successfully hold small community meetings and/or outreach events during the early part of the project. These smaller successes will be tangible evidence of the work you are doing and will increase trust that you are working with the community and working for the community.

- *Engage all partners, including local philanthropies, early.*

Make projects relevant to business, philanthropic and academic partners and involve them throughout the process. *If your group is not a nonprofit organization*, consider forming one or partnering with an existing one. Nonprofit status offers benefits and opportunities. Nonprofit organizations can also get funds outside of formal grant-writing processes such as direct donations.

It is important to include all parties in visioning and allow them a voice in determining the direction of the project. This process encourages investments either through direct funding, in-kind contributions or grant opportunities. This process might also reveal new opportunities for some parties to provide valuable expertise to enhance funding applications and project activities.

- *Be flexible and open-minded while developing projects and seeking partners.*

Be prepared to adapt your project plans based on the needs and interests of the community and funders. For example, the Hudson River Foundation (HRF) was interested in increasing use of the Hudson River by developing a rowing center along the river. They approached the community with the idea and learned that the center would not be used by community members because they were afraid of being in the water because many did not know how to swim. HRF then revised their project to include swimming lessons.

- *Develop and document measures of progress and success.*

Develop and use measures of progress and success early, such as number of acres restored, during planning and throughout the project. Documenting efforts and progress is important to instill confidence in the value of the monetary investments and future additional funding opportunities.

Carrie Clingan of the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation works on both sides of the fence. She reviews applications for NFWF grants, and she applies for grants from corporations to fund NFWF. She says that, to solicit funds from corporations, you'll need to build a business case statement to show how your project aligns with their bottom line. Many companies look for outcomes that use metrics like number of trees planted.

- *Identify people in your partnership who can procure non-federal funding.*

Consider identifying individuals who can focus efforts on procuring funding and serve as a central resource for the partnership and a central point of contact for the funding sources. These individuals can also take trainings in

grant writing and develop expertise. They might also tap other resources such as local government offices who can provide the grant writing expertise.

- *Look for collaborative solutions and develop solutions that are attractive to all partners.*

Know what you offer and seek collaborators to fill other needs for the project. You can attract collaborators by finding ways to suit their goals and needs as well as your own. In Big Marsh, Illinois, a heavily contaminated brownfields site, the state and federal agencies worked with the city of Chicago, the Audubon Green Corps and the Student Conservation Association for landscape management. The site has become an ecological destination with summer camps and an all-terrain bike park. The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation made contributions, as well as several private parties.

- *Communicate progress and success through events and social media.*

Celebrating progress through events that can be documented in a variety of media encourages additional participation. This approach can include events such as bridge walks, festivals or galas. Partners then receive public credit for their efforts. [WAWA](#), for example, engages the community through events like the Urban Forest Festival that is a celebration of urban forests, and an educational event that provides media coverage opportunities.

- *Develop new partnerships and maintain current relationships during the project period.*

It is critical to continue your relationship-building efforts even during your project. While you should work to continue strengthening your relationships with the partners listed in your grant application, it is also important to build new partnerships with new organizations and stakeholders.

- *Be realistic (do not over-promise).*

Many community members will be excited about your project. Therefore, it is very important that the goals and timeline of the project are made clear for as many people as possible.

Conclusion

A concerted effort for UWFP partners, under Ambassador leadership and other interested communities, to explore opportunities provided by foundations, philanthropies, businesses and academia might significantly increase investments in the watershed. Each UWFP Ambassador has potential to be the linchpin in exploring where opportunities exist and what the benefits may be. Local groups can then implement and expand their current efforts with the infusion of additional resources.

Appendix - List of Resources

Foundations that support Urban Waters projects:

- [Urban Waters Funders Network](#) is designed to create a forum to build relationships and catalyze action around water projects in urban settings that benefit the environment, and support equity and local economies.

- [The Kresge Foundation](#) – The Kresge Foundation funds outcome-based work and innovation developed at the local, state or national levels to strive for an equity-focused system of health and climate-ready communities.
- [National Fish and Wildlife Foundation](#) – NFWF provides funding on a competitive basis to projects that sustain, restore and enhance the nation’s fish, wildlife and plants, and their habitats.
- [Pisces Foundation](#) – The Pisces Foundation strives to advance strategic solutions to natural resource challenges and prepare the next generation by supporting environmental learning.
- [The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation](#) – The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation works to help achieve health equity and expand opportunity to pursue the best health possible, through investments in four broad areas: healthy communities, healthy children and weight, health leadership and health systems.
- [Rockefeller Foundation](#) – The Rockefeller Foundation works to advance new frontiers of science, data, policy and innovation to solve global challenges related to health, food, power and economic mobility.
- [Ford Foundation: Challenging Inequality Grants](#) – The Ford Foundation works and make grants in seven interconnected areas: civic engagement and government; free expression and creativity; equitable development; gender, racial and ethnic justice; inclusive economies; internet freedom; and youth opportunity and learning.
- [The Health and Environmental Funders Network](#) – HEFN is committed to activities at the nexus of environment and health. It produces information resources and organizes funder events to allow funders to collaborate around shared goals and projects. HEFN is currently working with the EPA and the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences to establish better lines of information sharing and collaboration. HEFN does not itself make grants.
- [Health Impact Project](#) – Launched by the Pew Charitable Trusts and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the Health Impact Project offers funding to communities and organizations seeking to promote the consideration of health in policy and decision-making. It funded 13 Health Impact Assessments in 2009 in 10 states. Eligibility varies based on the specific call for proposals.
- [The National Resource Network](#) – Operated by the Enterprise Communities Partners (a non-profit), the National Resource Network empowers local government leaders from economically challenged communities to take on their toughest problems. The Network partners with them by providing cross cutting technical assistance support to develop and execute strategies for economic turnaround.

Additional information on these foundations can be viewed on page 6 of the Urban Waters Ambassador’s Toolkit [here](#).

Online resources:

- [Foundation Center](#) is a paid subscription service. Many public libraries are members, and you can access their resources at your local library. Several interviewees for this paper recommended this resource.

- [GrantStation](#) is a paid subscription service for weekly emails of grant opportunities, and they offer grant writing trainings.
- [Funding Integration Tool for Source Water](#) is a one-stop-shop tool that explains how users can integrate various federal funding sources to support activities that protect sources of drinking water.

Training resources:

- Many universities often offer nonprofit management and fundraising courses and programs. For example, the [Midwest Center for Nonprofit Leadership](#) at the University of Missouri-Kansas City offers workshops and classes. The [University of Cincinnati](#) has outstanding resources for nonprofit management and grant procurement strategies and is highly regarded in the profession.
- Some communities have coalitions of local nonprofits that can offer help to each other with grant writing and contacts. Sometimes local coalitions can be competitive amongst each other, but it's better to be cooperative, celebrate each other's successes and write letters of support for each other. Kansas City has [Nonprofit Connect](#), a local organization that helps local nonprofits connect with each other and with donors. Check with your city, county, or state for similar organizations.
- [Technical Assistance to Brownfields](#) provides free technical assistance to communities and other stakeholders with brownfields redevelopment efforts including free workshops, webinars, online training tools and e-tools.
- [The Funders Network](#) is committed to helping funders understand and address racism, economic inequality, and the imbalance of power — while engendering community-driven solutions and amplifying the expertise and experiences of those communities who are least heard.

Grant Writing Support Tips for Ambassadors and Urban Waters Partners

Purpose: *This document provides guidance to Ambassadors and federal employees representing their agency in a local Urban Waters Partnership on how to identify funding opportunities and assist in preparing grant applications. It seeks to provide answers to the following questions:*

- *What can Ambassadors and federal agency partners do to help state and local partners seek grant funds? What are the limitations on grant seeking help that Ambassadors and federal partners can provide?*
- *What should Ambassadors do/not do to help provide training?*
- *What language should Ambassadors use to contact their funding agency for clarification?*

Improving Grant Writing Capacity through the Urban Waters Partnership

One of the Urban Waters Federal Partnership's key roles has been to foster partners' ability to achieve their Urban Waters-related goals. To help do this, the Ambassador and the core federal team may work to compile and share funding opportunities, provide grant guidance and assistance as appropriate, and promote collaboration.

How can Ambassadors work with local partners to prepare grant applications?

UWFP Ambassadors can take the following approaches to provide grant writing assistance:

- ***Coordinate a grant writing workshop***—Ambassadors are encouraged to assist in coordinating a grant writing workshop and to invite speakers to share information regarding [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov). Many Urban Waters locations have developed grant workshop presentations and, depending on audience experience, presentations can be specific to target audience needs. The Ambassador can reach out to federal leads regarding resources available to the UWFP Partnership. If an Ambassador is unable to coordinate a grant writing workshop, the Ambassador can seek contractor support for assistance. The Ambassador can also research and identify potential funding opportunities to gain contractor support.
- ***Compile and share funding opportunities with partners***—The Ambassador and core federal partners identify, compile and share funding opportunities that may further partners' Urban Waters-related goals and projects. The national bi-weekly newsletter and many local Urban Waters Partnership e-newsletters feature a regular "Funding Opportunities" section. Further, special email alerts can be scheduled for especially relevant or time-sensitive opportunities. Funding opportunities are also announced and/or discussed at Partnership meetings.
- ***Provide grant guidance and assistance***—Partners sometimes need help preparing quality proposals, connecting with partners, or managing and reporting on grants. While the Ambassador and federal leads cannot complete this work for the partner, they can provide guidance, such as reviewing grant applications and contacting partners about grant opportunities. As an example, the Northwest Indiana team often helps partners identify ways to meet match requirements to obtain grants, particularly when in-kind match is allowable. Ambassadors may also help develop a proposal narrative if this type of assistance is offered to

all partners equally and conflicts of interest are carefully avoided. Under the Justice40 Initiative, the [EPA's Environmental Justice Thriving Communities Technical Assistance Centers \(TCTACs\)](#) also provide training and other technical assistance to build capacity for navigating federal grant application systems, writing strong grant proposals and effectively managing grant funding. Ambassadors can connect with their EPA Regional Coordinators to seek out TCTAC support.

*It is important to note that federal employees never assist in developing or reviewing grant proposals for funding from their home agency and/or department. Federal partners are cognizant of their agency conflict of interest rules and always follow those carefully. Because the UWFP includes multiple agencies, at least one partner is typically unconnected to the funding agency and able to provide assistance. (Please see section below: *In what cases should an Ambassador avoid providing grant application assistance?*).*

- **Promote collaboration**—Local capacity to obtain grants can be limited by the ability of small organizations to administer large grants. Similarly, the funding range for certain grants often exceeds the amount required for individual projects. For this reason, local Partnerships can work to increase regional capacity by promoting collaboration among organizations to share resources and expertise, combine similar projects, and work together to prepare and administer grants.

In what cases should an Ambassador avoid providing grant application assistance?

Based on how the Ambassador position is funded, there are limits on the extent to which Ambassadors can provide direct grant writing assistance to local partners. If the Ambassador works for a nonprofit that is funded through a federal grant, the individual may not write or prepare a grant application (federal, state or private), unless approved by the agency funding their position. In some cases, it may make sense for Ambassadors to raise this issue at a Partnership meeting to find out what grant seeking support would be helpful and what conflicts of interest the partners are most concerned about.

While the Partnership often participates in grant-funded projects, letters of support are rarely issued, and Urban Waters is rarely listed as a formal partner. Given the range of federal agencies engaged in the UWFP, it is often inappropriate to issue letters of support for federal funding. For example, more than 60 organizations are part of the Northwest Indiana Partnership, and the team is careful to not advocate for one project or partner over another.

How should Ambassadors contact their funding agency for clarification?

If any questions arise, contact your funding agency for clarification on the extent to which you can provide guidance. If your Ambassador position is funded through the EPA, check with the EPA Headquarters' Urban Waters team and/or the EPA's grant office for further information or clarification. When contacting the grant office, here is some example language you can use:

- Can an employee/grant-funded person/contract-funded person (etc.) assist partners with applications for grant funding from our agency?
- Can an [employee] assist partners with applications for grant funding from other federal agencies or other nongovernmental organizations?

The goal is to determine: Is there a concern of a conflict of interest or favoritism legally or even in appearance?

Summary: How Ambassadors Can Provide Grant Writing Support

Ambassadors and Urban Waters Leads can assist with grant applications through (1) coordinating grant writing workshops, (2) compiling and sharing funding opportunities, (3) promoting partner collaboration, and (4) providing grant writing guidance. However, Ambassadors cannot directly write or prepare a grant application and typically cannot issue letters of support for funding. When providing grant writing assistance, Ambassadors and leads must be cognizant of, and avoid, potential conflicts of interest.