

Lake Pontchartrain Basin Restoration Program

Request for Proposals

FY22 INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT & JOB ACT FUNDING



Overview

The University of New Orleans Research and Technology Foundation (UNORTF) seeks written proposals for restoration projects and related scientific and public education projects for the Lake Pontchartrain Basin Restoration Program (PRP). This funding opportunity is made through the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Region 6 and the FY22 Infrastructure and Investment Jobs Act.

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| Announcement Date: | April 15, 2024 |
| Federal Funding: | <i>Approximately \$10,206,921</i> |
| Project Length: | 12-36 months |
| Project Cost Guidelines: | Projects costs may range between \$350,000 and \$1,500,000. *Some projects may be outside the recommended range and may be negotiated on a case-by-case basis. |
| Local Match Requirement: | The statutory match requirement has been waived by EPA Region 6 for the FY22 IIJA RFP. |
| Eligibility: | Federal, state, interstate, local governments, Tribal governments (must be federally recognized), regional water pollution control agencies, and other public or nonprofit private agencies, institutions, and organizations, public and private institutions of higher education. Eligible applicants may be located outside of the Lake Pontchartrain Basin, but projects must be located inside the Basin. Private profit-making entities, and individuals are not eligible. Non-profit organizations described in Section 501(c)(4) of the Internal Revenue Code that engage in lobbying activities as defined in Section 3 of the Lobbying Disclosure Act of 1995 are not eligible. |
| Proposal Format: | Proposals must follow RFP guidelines and be submitted electronically. Project workplans should not have a start date earlier than November 1, 2024 , and should include the elements identified in Section III of the RFP and the workplan template. |
| Delivery Format: | Email proposals to PRPgrant@thebeachuno.org . |
| Receipt Deadline: | Friday, May 31, 2024 (no later than 4pm) Late proposals will not be accepted. |
| Please Direct Inquiries To: | Blair Bourgeois at (504) 280-1044 or bbourgeois@thebeachuno.org |

Table 1. General Information

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Section I: Lake Pontchartrain Basin Restoration Program Information

Purpose of the Program

The purpose of the Lake Pontchartrain Basin Restoration Program (PRP) is to restore the ecological health of the Basin by developing and funding restoration projects and related scientific and public education projects to reduce the risk of pollution. Program activities vary, but typically include ecosystem and habitat restoration, water quality improvements, nutrient reduction, climate resilience, environmental education and outreach and local capacity building.

Statutory Authority

The PRP program is authorized by the Clean Water Act Section 121 (33 U.S.C. 1273). The PRP program is authorized by the Federal Water Pollution Control Act as amended under Section 121 (33 U.S.C. 1273) of the Estuaries and Clean Waters Act of 2000, and the Lake Pontchartrain Basin Restoration Act of 2000, 2 CFR 200, 2 CFR 1500, AND 40 CFR 33. The program is codified under CFDA Number 66.125.

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), Public Law 117-58, funds this FY22 Infrastructure Investment and Job Act award.

Section II: Programmatic Investment Areas

The PRP's *Comprehensive Conservation Management Plan* ([CCMP](#)) provides recommendations and strategies for project implementation to address environmental challenges within the Basin and help guide program investments. The CCMP identifies three key challenges within the Basin: 1) Sewage and Agricultural Runoff, 2) Stormwater Runoff, and 3) Saltwater Intrusion/Wetland Loss. Applicants should address one or more challenges described in the CCMP in their proposals.

A. CCMP Investment Areas

The CCMP grouped the major environmental challenges in the Basin in three categories:

1. **Sewage and Agricultural Runoff:** *Sewage and agricultural runoff are major sources of pollution within the Basin. These sources are known to contribute to elevated levels of and fecal coliform bacteria, resulting in water quality impairments. Potential sources of high bacteria count in these waterbodies include community sewage treatment plants, stormwater runoff from urbanized areas, sewage by-passes, broken sewer lines, dairy and cattle farms, and wildlife.*
2. **Stormwater Runoff:** *Stormwater runoff, a form of non-point source (NPS) pollution, is the largest single source of pollution in Lake Pontchartrain. Stormwater runoff occurs when rainfall--which can scour litter, animal droppings, particulates, and other contaminants that have settled on the ground, roofs or paved areas and carry them into the drainage system--is pumped into Lake Pontchartrain. Major pollutants in stormwater include sediments, nutrients, bacteria (pathogens), organics, metals, and pesticides.*
3. **Saltwater Intrusion and Wetland Loss:** *Saltwater intrusion and wetland loss are usually the result of a combination of natural and human-induced causes. Some of the natural causes include subsidence, or "settling," of wetlands; sea level rise; the Mississippi River levee network; and natural abandonment of former deltas of the Mississippi. Human-induced causes include canal construction, alterations to the natural surface hydrology, saltwater intrusion, shoreline erosion and dredging.*

In 2006, the PRP developed the Comprehensive Habitat Management Plan ([CHMP](#)) as an addendum to the CCMP, which helps expand on habitat management concerns and recommendations for the Basin. Please reference the CHMP for more information regarding habitat management. For purposes of this RFP, the CCMP and CHMP will be identified as the "CCMP."

Examples of projects included in the CCMP include:

- (a) Infrastructure improvements to un- and poorly-sewered communities along both the north and south shores of Lake Pontchartrain.
- (b) Expansion of household waste education programs and project that will evaluate individual home sewage system performance.
- (c) Technical assistance to rural agricultural communities (e.g., dairy farmers, cattle ranches).
- (d) Expand programs to eliminate inflow, overflows, and bypasses to stormwater drainage systems.
- (e) Implement bioremediation practices to reduce pollution (particularly pathogens) in urban stormwater.
- (f) Conservation to preserve critical ecosystem elements to sustain wetland habitat.

- (g) Evaluate accelerated and sustained programs to reduce the invasive species from refuges or wildlife management areas.

B. Addressing 2023 Stakeholder Meeting Investment Areas

On May 23, 2023, EPA conducted a stakeholder meeting to discuss funding opportunities and obtain input on investment priorities within the Basin. Stakeholders identified the areas below as priorities for program investments. Applicants are encouraged to develop proposals that address these recently identified investment areas in addition to linking their project directly to the CCMP:

- Eliminate and/or reduce pollution and water quality impairments ([link to Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality's presentation on water quality impairments within the Basin](#));
- Reduce stormwater runoff;
- Protect and restore habitat and wetlands;
- Promote and implement green infrastructure practices;
- Restore abandoned gravel mines;
- Address climate resilience and mitigation;
- Benefit disadvantaged communities; and
- Access to green space and recreation areas (ex. Lincoln Beach).

These are only *examples* of investment areas; project proposals addressing other investment areas will be considered if they are consistent with the CCMP.

C. Incorporating Climate Resilience Challenges and/or Disadvantaged Community Benefits

Deteriorating coastal conditions and storm surges pose major threats to the Basin, and communities are significantly affected by this changing environment. Flood events and the harms associated with these impacts affect all communities of the Basin, but disproportionately affect the communities who are under resourced to prepare for and recover from such events. The PRP will support opportunities to implement projects which provide communities with resiliency to the effects of climate change.

Disadvantaged communities are those who are marginalized, underserved, and overburdened by pollution. Applicants proposing projects in disadvantaged communities and/or addressing climate resilience will receive additional consideration. Please visit the [EPA's EJScreen: Environmental Justice Screening & Mapping Tool](#), and reference Appendix A of this RFP to find disadvantaged communities in your area. For more information about how to incorporate climate adaptation into a project, please reference the [EPAs 2021 Climate Adaptation Plan](#).

D. Build America, Buy America (BABA) Implementation Plan

BABA is only applicable for projects that will involve the construction of permanent fixtures, and it applies to both base and BIL-funded projects. BABA requires that award recipients of federal financial assistance comply with the following requirement when working on infrastructure projects:

All iron, steel, manufactured products, and construction materials permanently incorporated into an infrastructure project must be produced in the United States.

There are exceptions for select construction materials, and various types of waiver options. Refer to Appendix D for complete PRP BABA details.

Section III: Key Proposal Elements

(Proposal should be submitted on the linked [workplan/budget](#) template.)

A. Proposal Details

Project workplans **should not** *have a start date earlier than September 1, 2024*, and should include the following elements:

1. **Project Name**
2. **Organization Name**
3. **Points of Contact**
4. **Amount of Funds Requested:** Individual awards are expected to range between \$350,000 and \$1,500,000; proposals above or below the ranges listed will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. All funding decisions are subject to funding availability, quality of applications, and other applicable considerations.
5. **Expected Project Period:** It is UNORTF's expectation that the award will have a maximum period of performance of up to three years.
6. **Specific Project Location:** Physical address, latitude and longitude coordinates, service area, HUC 12 watershed and other relevant location information as needed.
7. **Project Objectives:** Describe specific goals and objectives of the proposal. For example, "The objectives are to restore *x acres/mi²* of habitat and reduce nonpoint source runoff."
8. **Project Activities:** See Appendix B for a list of potential PRP activities. Each activity must be listed as a separate task, and include:
 - a. Description of activities;

- b. Estimated milestones and tasks;
- c. Anticipated outputs, outcomes and metrics;
- d. Cost per task;
- e. Specific schedule for each task; and
- f. Link to CCMP and EPA Strategic Plan.

9. **Past Performance:** Please describe previous grants you have completed through funds from UNORTF or other assistance agreements, if applicable, including:
- a. Significant outputs and outcomes.
 - b. Key environmental and programmatic accomplishments.

10. Project Leads, Partners, and Roles

11. **Detailed Budget:** please use EPA budget class categories. The statutory match requirement has been waived by EPA Region 6 for the FY22 IIJA award.

B. CCMP Linkage

The activities to be funded under this RFP must be identified in the CCMP and support Sewage and Agricultural Runoff, Stormwater Runoff and Saltwater Intrusion/Wetland loss (habitat management). Applicants are also encouraged to develop projects that will benefit disadvantaged communities and/or address climate resilience.

C. EPA Strategic Plan Linkage

The activities to be funded under this solicitation must support the [FY 2022-2026 Strategic Plan](#). Awards made under this solicitation will support:

- Goal 5 “Ensure Clean and Safe Water for All Communities,” Objective 5.2 – Protect and Restore Waterbodies and Watersheds;
- Goal 2 “Take Decisive Action to Advance Environmental Justice and Civil Rights,” Objective 2.2 – Embed Environmental Justice and Civil Rights into EPA’s Programs, Policies, and Activities; and
- Goal 1 “Tackle the Climate Crisis,” Objective 1.2 – “Accelerate Resilience and Adaptation to Climate Change Impacts of the Strategic Plan.”

D. Outputs, Outcomes, and Metrics

Output- The term “*output*” means an environmental activity, effort, and/or associated work product related to an environmental goal or objective that will be produced or provided over a period of time or by a specified date. Outputs may be quantitative or qualitative but must be measurable over the term of the grant funding period.

Outcome- The term “*outcome*” means the result, effect, or consequence that will be achieved by carrying out an environmental activity, effort, and/or associated work product that is related to an environmental or programmatic goal or objective. Outcomes may be environmental, behavioral, health-related, or programmatic in nature, must be quantitative, and may not necessarily be achievable within a grant funding period. For this RFP, outcomes describe the project metrics and conditions that the recipient aims to achieve for the Basin that are found in the CCMP, the Stakeholder Meeting Investment Areas and/or Benefits to Disadvantaged Communities and/or Climate Change Resilience. Efforts to achieve these outcomes will steer the actions necessary to meet specific targets.

Metrics- The term “*metrics*” refers to specific, trackable measures specified in Appendix C (see Appendix C for a list of potential project metrics). Applicants must incorporate metrics reporting into their workplan. Please note, selected recipients shall work with UNORTF to determine final metrics for the recipient to track and report on through the life of the grant.

Section IV: Selection Criteria

Projects will be reviewed using the following criteria.

| Criterion | Description |
|---|---|
| Benefits to Disadvantaged Communities and Increased Climate Resiliency | <p>Since this is a national priority, applicant will be evaluated based on the quality and extent to which they demonstrate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A plan for meaningful engagement of EPA-defined disadvantaged communities and explain in detail the project’s benefit to these disadvantaged communities. See the EPA EJScreen: Environmental Justice Screening & Mapping Tool, and Appendix A for additional information. • Include project tasks which mitigate effects of climate change and/or promote climate change resilience. See the EPA 2021 Climate Adaptation Plan and Region 6 Final Implementation Plan |

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| <p style="text-align: center;">Project Design</p> | <p>Applicants will be evaluated based on the extent and quality of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The overall proposed project and relevancy to the request for proposals; and • Demonstration of an innovative approach to perform the project or deliver results. This may include concepts, approaches, methods, or any combination to reflect the recommendations of the CCMP and/or stakeholder priorities. This may be substantiated by environmental data provided by the State. • Anticipated public benefits to be derived from the project, including describing the degree to which the project will have application towards improving the ecological health of the Basin, and likelihood of this occurring. |
| <p style="text-align: center;">Environmental Results:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Outcomes, Outputs and Performance Measures for Improving the Ecological Health of the Basin</p> | <p>Applicants will be evaluated based on the extent and quality of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anticipated environmental results: outputs and outcomes; and • How the workplan addresses the needs of the Basin as identified by the current RFP, and CCMP, CHMP, and published data from the State. • How the workplans goals clearly align with the EPA's Strategic Plan. • A workplans methodology for qualitative and quantitative measuring, tracking, data collection, and reporting of results. • A clearly articulated milestone schedule for project tasks, including key milestones for specific tasks and the likelihood of completion of the project's goals and objectives by project end. |

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| Collaboration, Communication and Dissemination of Results | <p>Applicants will be evaluated based on the extent to which they demonstrate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diverse and unique partnerships, particularly those that contribute to expected environmental results and help build capacity. • A clear communications plan that will actively transfer and disseminate project-related information to appropriate audiences and relevant stakeholders, with the goal of expanding adoption of successful approaches. |
| Programmatic Capability/Technical Experience/Qualifications | <p>Under this criterion, applications will be evaluated based on the applicant's ability to successfully manage and complete the proposed project considering their:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizational and programmatic preparedness related to the proposed project: infrastructure, training, relevant codes, ordinances, permits, design plans, and team building, and other related attributes that help implement the proposed project in a successful way, within the approved deadline. • Follow the approved scope of work and communicate quickly with UNORTF on any issues. Submit deliverables to grantee on time and on budget. • Education and qualifications, staff and management experience, and ability to perform the proposed work and meet milestones in a timely manner. • Past performance: <i>If applicable, has the applicant successfully completed EPA agreements, which includes timely reporting, and demonstration of progress tracking towards achieving outputs and outcomes?</i> |

Table 2. Selection Criteria

Section V: Application Review and Selection Process

A. How to Apply

Submit electronic proposals to Blair Bourgeois via e-mail at PRPgrant@thebeachuno.org.

B. Review and Selection Schedule

The schedule below is subject to change. Please check the program page of the UNORTF website (<https://thebeachuno.org/lake-pontchartrain-basin-restoration-program/>) for the most current dates and information.

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| Proposal Due Date | May 31, 2024 no later than 4:00 pm, cst |
| Announcement of Recommendations | August 1, 2024 via email |

Table 3. Important Timelines and Deadlines

C. Review and Approval Process

UNORTF will conduct a threshold review to ensure that applicants have the capacity and experience necessary to complete the projects. Projects will be reviewed to ensure that they are restoration projects and studies identified in the CCMP approved for the Basin and public education projects recommended by the management conference. Finally, the EPA will review selected projects to ensure they are technically sound as well as eligible, reasonable, and allocable before UNORTF begins the subaward agreement phase. The process will take approximately 90 days.

D. Final Approval

UNORTF will prepare and send Subaward Agreements for execution by the applicant's authorized officials. Project work may only begin after a Subaward Agreement has been fully executed. No sampling may begin without an approved Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP).

Section VI: Geographic Focus



Figure 1. United States, Louisiana: Lake Pontchartrain Basin

Louisiana Parishes

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|-------------|-------------|------------------|----------------------|
| Ascension | St. James | East Baton Rouge | St. John the Baptist |
| Iberville | St. Tammany | Jefferson | Tangipahoa |
| Livingston | Washington | Plaquemines | St. Helena |
| St. Bernard | Orleans | St. Charles | East Feliciana |

Mississippi Counties

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| Lincoln | Pike | Amite | Wilkinson |
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Table 4. Parishes/Counties Eligible for PRP Funding