

Great Lakes Local Action Fund

2026 Application Guidelines

Contact Information

For questions regarding the Great Lakes Local Action Fund (GLLAF), please contact:

The GLLAF Team

Email: greatlakesfund@ontario.ca

For questions or technical support with the online Transfer Payment Ontario platform, please contact:

Transfer Payment Ontario Client Care

Telephone: 1-855-216-3090

Email: TPONCC@ontario.ca

1.0 Great Lakes Local Action Fund (GLLAF)

To continue supporting community efforts to protect and restore the Great Lakes, the Ontario government, through the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks, is investing up to \$1.8 million through the Great Lakes Local Action Fund Round 4.

Funding will support community-based projects that protect or improve water quality, strengthen climate resilience, restore and protect Great Lakes ecosystems, and support local stewardship and community action across Ontario's Great Lakes basin.

1.1 Funding

Generally, applicants may apply for up to \$50,000 per project.

Requests greater than \$50,000 and up to \$100,000 may be considered for projects that demonstrate high environmental benefit, strong project design, readiness to proceed, and broad community engagement or partnership outcomes.

This is a competitive funding program. Not all eligible applications will be funded.

1.2 Project timelines

Funding is expected to be available for eligible project costs incurred during the project agreement period, anticipated to begin in March 2027 and end in December 2027.

Where appropriate and approved by the ministry, project timelines may be extended to March 2028.

All project activities, reporting, and financial documentation must be completed by the date set out in the transfer payment agreement. Applicants should build in sufficient time between the end of project activities and final reporting to prepare required documentation.

1.3 Application timeline

Applications must be submitted electronically through the Transfer Payment Ontario ([“TPON”](#)) portal by November 6, 2026.

Applications that are incomplete, not fully submitted through TPON by the deadline, or submitted after the deadline will not be accepted.

Successful applicants will be required to enter into a transfer payment agreement with the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks before receiving funding or beginning any ministry-funded project activities.

2.0 Applying through Transfer Payment Ontario

Applicants must have a TPON account in order to apply. If you do not have a TPON account, you must first create a My Ontario account and then register for TPON. Applicants are encouraged to register early and access the application form as soon as possible to allow time to address any technical or application-related questions before the submission deadline.

Once you are registered and have access, the next step is to download and complete the application form (and supporting documents) through TPON.

If you have any questions or difficulties during this process, there are resources to assist at ontario.ca/GetFunding or you may contact the TPON Ontario Customer Service Line at 416-325-6691 or 1-855-216-3090, Monday to Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. (ET), or by email at TPONCC@Ontario.ca.

3.0 Program Objectives

Projects must support at least one of the Great Lakes Local Action Fund objectives below.

1. Nature-Based Outcomes

- Projects that restore, protect, or enhance Great Lakes ecosystems, including:

- wetland, shoreline, coastal, and aquatic habitat restoration and protection;
- water quality improvement;
- biodiversity conservation; and
- climate resilience and ecosystem function.
- Example: Projects that restore wetlands, riparian areas, shorelines, or aquatic habitats to improve ecosystem health, water quality, and resilience.

2. Community Innovation

- Projects that support local action and stewardship through community-led solutions to Great Lakes challenges, including:
 - plastic pollution reduction;
 - road salt impacts;
 - localized flood risk;
 - shoreline and watershed improvements;
 - demonstration or scalable approaches; and
 - partnerships that strengthen local capacity and engagement.
- Example: Community-designed projects that test or demonstrate local solutions to water quality, pollution prevention, stewardship, or watershed challenges.

3. Economic Resilience

- Projects that strengthen local capacity and generate sustainable economic benefits directly related to Great Lakes protection and restoration activities, including:
 - local employment and skills development associated with project implementation;
 - community capacity building to support ongoing stewardship and environmental action;
 - partnerships, procurement, and project delivery that support sustainable local economies; and
 - leveraging of financial or in-kind contributions to extend the impact of public investment.
- Example: Projects that engage local contractors, landowners, volunteers, Indigenous communities, youth, or community partners while delivering measurable environmental outcomes.

Cross-Cutting Considerations

- Across all objectives, applicants are encouraged to consider how their project may contribute to:
 - Indigenous participation and leadership;
 - youth engagement;
 - under-represented communities;
 - knowledge sharing and stewardship; and
 - community capacity building.

Applications will be evaluated based on how well the proposed project contributes to one or more program objectives and demonstrates measurable, achievable outcomes.

4.0 Eligibility

4.1 Eligible Applicants

To be eligible for funding, the applicant must be a legal incorporated entity, such as:

- community-based incorporated organizations
- conservation organizations (i.e., non-governmental, not-for-profit, charitable corporations whose work focuses on environmental protection, conservation, and/or restoration)
- Indigenous communities
- conservation authorities and their foundations*
- municipal governments*
- academic institutions including schools as represented by their school boards, universities and community colleges
- industry and non-profit associations or organizations

Applicants are strongly encouraged to seek partnership opportunities with other organizations in their community (e.g., community/youth groups, schools/school boards, small businesses, etc.) to enhance project outcomes, community engagement and awareness, including opportunities supporting broader inclusion and diversity with underserved or underrepresented communities.

The organization that would oversee and take responsibility for implementing the project is the organization that must apply, and that organization must meet the eligibility criteria above.

*To be eligible for funding, municipalities and conservation authorities and foundations associated with a conservation authority must partner with at least one community-based organization or Indigenous community and must provide a signed letter from the community-based organization or Indigenous community as part of their application, which sets out the role of the organization/community in the proposed project.

- Community-based organizations include local not-for-profit groups like agricultural, landowner, youth, and environmental and conservation groups, as well as schools and other academic institutions, and First Nations and Métis organizations.
- Partnering with a community-based organization means the community-based organization must be actively involved in delivering the project, for example, participating in project design; or contributing a significant amount of staff or volunteer time to the project's implementation.

Notes:

- If awarded funding, a First Nations community may require a Band Council resolution to

enter into the transfer payment agreement with the ministry. When required by the community, a copy shall be provided to the ministry prior to signing the transfer payment agreement.

- Métis communities and organizations include the Métis Nation of Ontario Secretariat and Métis communities/organizations that are incorporated or that are associated with a corporation that serves as the legal entity for contracting purposes.
- If awarded funding, a municipality may require a by-law authorizing the municipality to enter into the transfer payment agreement with the Ministry. When required by the municipality, a copy of the by-law shall be provided to the ministry prior to signing a transfer payment agreement.

4.2 Eligible projects

To be eligible for funding, projects must:

- aim to meet at least one of the GLLAF objectives described above
- engage community members in the implementation of the project
 - Note: Applicants are strongly encouraged to seek out partnership and collaboration opportunities with other organizations to enhance youth and community engagement during the implementation of the project, including underserved and underrepresented communities.
- start no earlier than January 1, 2027, and be completed by December 31, 2027

Incomplete applications and projects that do not meet the criteria above will not be considered eligible for funding. Please see section 6.0 below for detailed information about what must be included in a complete application package.

To be eligible for funding, projects must:

- support at least one of the GLLAF objectives described in section 3.0;
- engage community members in the implementation of project activities;
- include direct actions that contribute to Great Lakes protection, restoration, water quality, climate resilience, stewardship, or related community outcomes;
- be ready to proceed within the project agreement period;
- identify required permits, approvals, permissions, or site access requirements, where applicable; and
- be completed within the timelines set out in the transfer payment agreement.

Applicants are strongly encouraged to seek partnership and collaboration opportunities with other organizations to enhance community engagement, youth involvement, knowledge sharing, Indigenous participation, and participation by underserved or under-represented communities.

Incomplete applications and projects that do not meet the eligibility criteria above will not be considered eligible for funding. Please see section 6.0 for detailed information about what must be included in a complete application package.

The following types of projects are ineligible for funding:

- projects where the entire focus is on education and outreach (i.e., with no direct actions addressing program objectives)
- feasibility studies or plans, and land-use planning
- contaminated site remediation (e.g., sediment remediation, brownfields)
- activities that occur within Provincial Parks
- strictly beautification activities
- land acquisition
- projects being done to comply with specific legal requirements
- projects requiring an individual or class environmental assessment (EA) (unless already completed or a class EA category A project)
- projects where the funds are used to build, develop, purchase, or make significant improvements to capital assets owned/controlled by the funding recipient

The lists of eligible and ineligible projects above are not comprehensive. If you are unsure about the eligibility of your project and activities, please contact us by email at greatlakesfund@ontario.ca, or by phone at 705-761-3970.

Eligible groups can apply for more than one project but must use a separate application form for each eligible project. The ministry may, in its absolute discretion, limit the number projects awarded funding per eligible group.

4.3 Eligible Costs

Funding may be awarded to an eligible group for up to 100% of eligible costs incurred in Ontario directly related to the delivery of eligible projects. Any eligible project costs which are paid for using funds provided to the recipient under an GLLAF transfer payment agreement may not also be paid for by other funding sources.

Administration costs for the project cannot exceed 25% of the funding requested.

Applicants should be aware that the ministry may not fund all aspects of a project, although the applicant will be required to complete the full project in order to receive allocated transfer payment funds. Applicants should identify in the application form how the full project will be completed if only

partial transfer payment funds are provided from the GLLAF.

Examples of **eligible** costs include:

- **Goods:** Includes materials and supplies required for the project.
- **Services:** Includes third party costs such as contractor services/equipment. Costs for some types of services may include reasonable disbursements in addition to fees if commonly charged for such services. However, funds may not be used for costs that would otherwise be ineligible for the program (e.g., hospitality).
- **Staff:** Includes wages and mandatory benefits for staff assigned to the project, such as project managers, and that will be directly involved in implementing the project.
- **Consultants:** Includes third party expertise for services such as detailed engineering or landscape design plans. Consultant costs may include reasonable disbursements in addition to fees if commonly charged for such consulting services. However, funds may not be used for costs that would otherwise be ineligible for the program (e.g., hospitality).
- **Equipment/other capital items:** Generally limited to rental costs. A purchase may be approved, by request, under certain circumstances.

Note: Funding from the ministry may be applied to the non-refundable portion of HST only. The ministry will not provide any funds beyond the approved funding amount.

Examples of **ineligible** costs include:

- ongoing overhead, core administrative activities of organizations (e.g., rent)
- Insurance
- capital expenses relating to the purchase, construction or betterment of tangible capital assets (e.g., building structures, vehicles, office furniture, computers, IT or communication equipment, or any other assets that have a useful life of greater than one year and meant for use in the organization's operation on a continuous basis)
- land securement
- clothing (except for safety purposes)
- appreciation gifts (e.g., gift certificates for volunteers)
- honoraria (except for honoraria for Indigenous Elders or community knowledge holders for their participation, which are eligible costs)
- travel, accommodation, hospitality, or entertainment expenses (e.g., food, beverages)
- signage that does not provide information relevant to the project
- costs incurred prior to the effective date of the transfer payment agreement with the ministry
- refundable harmonized sales tax (HST)

- legal costs including but not limited to litigation

The lists of eligible and ineligible costs are not comprehensive. If you are unsure about whether your costs may be eligible for funding, please contact us by email at greatlakesfund@ontario.ca, or by phone at 705-761-3970.

By receiving funds from the GLLAF, the recipient may become subject to legislation applicable to organizations that receive funding from the Government of Ontario, including the *Broader Public Sector Accountability Act, 2010* (Ontario), the *Public Sector Salary Disclosure Act, 1996* (Ontario), and the *Auditor General Act* (Ontario).

Applicants are responsible for ensuring and showing that no project expenses which are being requested from GLLAF are also covered by other funding sources (i.e., no “double-dipping”).

5.0 Application Evaluation

All GLLAF applications undergo an initial screening to confirm completeness and eligibility. Eligible applications are then evaluated based on their technical merit and potential to achieve measurable environmental results. Projects are scored out of a maximum of 100 points and assessed using a two-stage, tiered evaluation process.

Stage 1 focuses on project merit and assesses factors such as anticipated outcomes and measurability, project design and readiness, value for money and leveraged funding, and partnership and community benefits.

Stage 2 supports overall program balance by considering geographic distribution, thematic and project-type representation, recipient diversity, and the avoidance of funding duplication.

Stage 1: Project Merit Assessment (85 points)

Stage 1 evaluates the clarity of environmental outcomes, indicators, monitoring approach, and relevance to Great Lakes priorities, including contribution to program performance measures.

The following criteria are assessed under Stage 1:

- Outcomes and Measurability (30 points)
 - Outcomes are clearly defined and measurable, supported by relevant indicators and a clear and appropriate approach to tracking and, where applicable, verifying results, and demonstrating alignment with established program performance measures.
- Project Design and Readiness (20 points)
 - Workplan is clear, feasible, implementation-ready, and supported by practical risk mitigation.

- Partnership and Community Benefit (20 points)
 - Strong collaboration, meaningful partner roles, and clear community impact tied to project delivery.

Stage 2: Program-Level Considerations (15 points)

Stage 2 supports program-level balance across advanced applications is applied after technical merit in stage one. It is intended to support balance across the highest-ranking applications.

The following criteria are assessed under Stage 2:

- Program-Level Considerations (15 points)
 - Strengthens program distribution, diversity, gap coverage, or duplication avoidance.

Whether or not to provide funding and who funding is provided to is within the sole discretion of the ministry. In its final evaluation, the ministry may also consider the kinds of projects proposed, geographic distribution, the number of projects funded per organization, and types of organizations applying in order to support a variety of projects and recipients across the province.

5.1 Performance Measures

Performance measures help demonstrate how a project contributes to the goals of the Great Lakes Local Action Fund and how project results will be measured and reported.

Applicants are not expected to report on every performance measure. Instead, applicants should select the measures that are most relevant to their proposed activities and expected outcomes.

Projects must identify at least one performance measure that demonstrates progress toward one or more GLLAF objectives.

Performance measures should be:

- relevant to the proposed activities;
- measurable and achievable; and
- clearly connected to anticipated project outcomes.

Examples of performance measures may include:

- area of habitat restored, enhanced, or protected;
- reduction of pollutants entering Great Lakes waters, including road salt and plastics;
- volunteers, youth, schools, organizations, or community members engaged;

- educational materials distributed or awareness activities delivered;
- stewardship actions implemented; and
- climate adaptation or resilience actions completed.

Applicants are encouraged to identify measurable results wherever possible. For example:

- engaging 250 participants in stewardship activities;
- restoring two hectares of habitat;
- removing invasive species from a project site; or
- reducing road salt use within a target area.

Performance measure results from individual projects are combined to help the ministry understand the overall impact of the Great Lakes Local Action Fund and its contribution to healthier Great Lakes ecosystems, stronger community stewardship, and more resilient local communities.

6.0 What to include in the application package

Incomplete applications will not be considered for funding. A completed application package must include:

- a completed application form through TPON, including a fully completed work plan that outlines how all project activities will be finished and final reporting submitted by March 31, 2027. The final reporting date for each individual project will be set out in the transfer payment agreement.
- a detailed project budget
- signed letters of support from key organizations or individuals, other than your organization and its members, if they are critical to project delivery or required for eligibility purposes
- property access permission from landowners
- signed letters from other funding sources, if any, to confirm their contributions

The following items are also suggested for inclusion in the application package, to strengthen the application:

- copies of permits, approvals, or permit applications needed for your project, if applicable and available. These may be submitted at a later date if needed.
- organization's purchasing policy, if available
- a map or maps of the site(s) should be included if it helps to explain the project

7.0 Additional Information for Applicants

- Applicants are responsible for obtaining all permits to implement the proposed activities. Permits and approvals do not need to be in place at the time of the application submission. However, applicants should identify required permits or approvals, expected timing, and any mitigation measures where relevant.
- Applicants are responsible for obtaining landowner permission to access private property to undertake the proposed activities.
- For projects occurring on private property, applicants are strongly encouraged to enter into a stewardship agreement with the property owner to ensure project objectives and outcomes are sustained.

8.0 Notification

All applicants will be notified by e-mail of the outcome of their application. Following provisional approval of successful projects, recipients will be required to enter into a transfer payment agreement with the Province of Ontario before any payments will be made. Applicants should not proceed with a project on the expectation that it will be funded under the GLLAF without an executed agreement with the ministry.

9.0 Agreement and Payment

Before any funding is provided, successful applicants will be required to enter into a transfer payment agreement which includes the terms and conditions of the project, expenditures and reporting requirements.

The terms and conditions of the funding will be set out in detail in the transfer payment agreement. Generally, those terms and conditions will be consistent with the following:

- payments will be made following the completion of milestones and ministry approval of required project reporting and in alignment with cash flow needs. An initial payment is generally made upon signing of the transfer payment agreement.
- the final date to submit all final reporting and financial documentation is November 6, 2026.
- applicants approved for funding will be required to submit certificates of insurance to confirm coverage in accordance with the terms of the transfer payment agreement
- applicants approved for funding will need to attest in TPON that they are in good standing with tax, labour and environmental laws

Until the transfer payment agreement is finalized and signed, the ministry cannot guarantee funds for any project. Successful applicants shall not announce nor disclose information about the funding or the agreement until they are advised by the ministry.

If you would like to see an example of the detailed transfer payment agreement before applying, please contact us at greatlakesfund@ontario.ca.

10.0 Recognition

Following the execution of the transfer payment agreement, and subject to Ministry direction and approval, successful applicants may be required to acknowledge financial assistance from the Government of Ontario in project communication, signage, reports, or other materials. Recognition requirements will be set out in the transfer payment agreement.

11.0 Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy

All applications submitted to the ministry may be subject to the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (FIPPA). FIPPA provides a right of access to information in the custody or under the control of the ministry, subject to a limited set of exemptions, such as section 17(1) of the act. This exemption applies to information that reveals a trade secret or scientific, technical, commercial, financial or labour relations information supplied in confidence, where the disclosure could reasonably be expected to result in certain harms.

If an applicant believes that any of the information contained in its application or submitted to the ministry under TPON falls under this exemption, and the applicant (or another party to whom the information relates) wishes to indicate to the ministry that submitted material is confidential, it should be clearly marked as confidential. If the ministry receives a request for access to this information, the ministry may notify the applicant so the applicant may make representations concerning its disclosure.

Applicants are advised that the names of funding recipients, the amount of funding, and the purpose for which funding is awarded is information the ministry routinely makes available to the public.

12.0 Auditing

To ensure integrity in the use of public funds, the Province of Ontario reserves the right to require independent verification of reported information as required in the terms of the transfer payment agreement. The terms as set out in a transfer payment agreement must be satisfied to receive payments.

The successful applicant shall provide, if requested by the province, any necessary permissions to access the property where the project activities took place for a site visit and make available any records, documents and/or information that may be required for this purpose.

13.0 Terms of Reference

The following provisions apply to this application process for GLLAF:

- (i) This application process is not intended to create a formal legally binding procurement process and shall not give rise to the legal rights or duties applied to a formal legally binding procurement process.

- (ii) The ministry reserves the right to seek clarification, and supplementary information relating to the clarification, from applicants. The response received by the ministry from an applicant shall form an integral part of the applicant's submission.
- (iii) At the conclusion of this process, selected applicants will be expected to enter into a transfer payment agreement with the ministry (please see section 9.0 of the guidelines for further information).
- (iv) Neither party shall have the right to make claims against the other with respect to this application process, the selection of any applicant, the failure to be selected to enter into a transfer payment agreement, or the failure to honour applications prior to the execution of such an agreement.
- (v) The ministry will not consider an applicant whose application is found to contain misrepresentations.