



2023 Request for Proposals

Overview

The Daybreak Fund is soliciting proposals for nature-based projects in the Western Lake Michigan Basin at the intersection of climate change and water quality. The Fund will award approximately \$1.5 million in grants per year starting in 2023 to support initiatives with multiple benefits to water quality, carbon storage, biodiversity, and people and communities in both urban and rural areas.

Background

The Daybreak Fund is a new donor collaborative supported by Brico Fund, Builders Initiative (pending), Caerus Foundation, Cool Choices, Crown Family Philanthropies, and Fund for Lake Michigan as well as other Midwest funders.

These foundations have come together with a shared vision that the abundant but threatened natural resources of the Midwest hold enormous potential to protect Lake Michigan from further impacts of climate change.

Our focus on the Lake Michigan Basin within Wisconsin and Lake County, Illinois will highlight the region's ability to address climate change while improving water quality by using nature-based solutions in our urban and rural areas. Nature-based solutions are those that enhance the ability of our ecosystems to sequester carbon in plants, trees, soils and sediments, and lead to improved health, cleaner water, flood and erosion control, increased biodiversity and resilience to the impacts of climate change.

Nature-based solutions lend themselves to active local engagement and unique partnerships which are key components of environmental and climate justice and ensure long-lasting, sustainable change. Nature-based solutions bring multiple benefits for both urban and rural areas that can catalyze innovation and drive system-level solutions to some of our most pressing environmental challenges.

Guiding Principles

The Daybreak Fund partners have come together with a desire to increase our impact and make connections among both funders and grantees by weaving Great Lakes, climate, biodiversity and equity philanthropy together to implement solutions that provide maximum benefits to society and the environment.

Our central goal is to improve the lives of people while safeguarding our environment. The funding partners are committed to an equitable and transparent grant-making process and recognize the importance of supporting community-based solutions that value and center local knowledge and local leaders. We want to empower grantees to propose solutions that will move systems forward and take advantage of unique opportunities that provide the most benefit to the lives of the people and function of the ecosystems in this area.







We prioritize initiatives that empower diverse communities throughout the Basin to build resiliency, transition to a sustainable economy and promote system change. Our ideal portfolio of grants includes both upstream solutions in rural areas and downstream solutions in urban areas that provide both mitigation and resilience benefits. We aim to invest at least 40 percent of the grants made through the Daybreak Fund in communities that are disadvantaged, underserved and/or overburdened by pollution.

While we are particularly interested in driving innovation, we also understand that there are many proven methods of impacting change that need resources, and the Daybreak Fund will welcome those applications as well.

Program Funding Priorities

We seek to advance nature-based solutions that combine a number of co-benefits that both improve water quality and address climate change. The majority of our funding will focus on on-the-ground projects using nature-based solutions that have the potential to scale up or prove new concepts.

We are eager to fund both new and established efforts, and will support project implementation, planning, design, monitoring, staffing, and maintenance as well as community engagement and applied research that will support or advance on-the-ground nature-based initiatives. Some examples include:

-  **Supporting frontline communities in their efforts to address and adapt to climate change.**
Climate change disproportionately impacts low-income and vulnerable communities. Frontline communities are those that experience the consequences of climate change and other environmental injustices “first and worst.” These communities may be located in urban or rural areas depending on the risks they face. Frontline groups are closest to the projects that can make a difference for their community. We will support frontline groups’ efforts to build resiliency and to address environmental injustices and historic inequities in their communities.
-  **Innovative agricultural practices that mitigate and reduce or capture carbon, improve water quality and lead to systems-level shifts in behavior.**
Agriculture is key to our region’s identity and economy, but it also plays a critical role in delivering solutions to our environmental challenges. Regenerative farming practices can reduce runoff, store carbon, improve soil health and increase biodiversity all while increasing crop yields. These sustainable farming methods can lead to market transformation and provide an opportunity for our region to be at the forefront of this transition.
-  **Forest and land stewardship and use of traditional ecological knowledge to store carbon while protecting or enhancing biodiversity and water quality.**
Our area’s landscape is filled with forests, prairies, wetlands and publicly and privately owned lands that provide a range of ecosystem services when managed properly. These lands hold potential for carbon sequestration, flood mitigation, water quality improvement, and biodiversity protection. We seek projects that intentionally promote, integrate or pilot new climate mitigation strategies and traditional ecological knowledge into land restoration, forest management or biodiversity projects.
-  **Combining renewable energy with water quality solutions.**
In order to achieve clean energy goals, renewable energy will be an increasing part of the landscape. Pairing renewable energy projects with nature-based initiatives like green stormwater



infrastructure, pollinator habitat or other land, forestry and agricultural practices has great potential to create co-benefits for our ecosystems. Proving the co-benefits of renewable energy paired with additional sustainability measures will help reduce land use conflicts, improve water quality and increase other ecosystem benefits. Likewise, projects that combine renewable energy and green stormwater infrastructure will help communities adapt to the increasing risks posed by climate change.

This list is only intended to provide examples of areas that lend themselves to nature-based initiatives that benefit our water and climate. **This list should in no way limit innovative thinking about how to use nature-based approaches that could catalyze meaningful change** – we are very willing to consider projects outside these areas that show promise.

Geographic Focus

Geographically, these grants will be targeted to watersheds within the Lake Michigan Basin in Wisconsin as well as projects within the basin in Lake County, Illinois. The Daybreak Fund will also consider grants in Wisconsin outside of the Lake Michigan Basin by invitation. **If you have a project idea outside the basin, please contact Amber Meyer Smith at amber@fundforlakemichigan.org to discuss.**

View a larger version of the map at the [Daybreak Fund website](#).

Eligibility

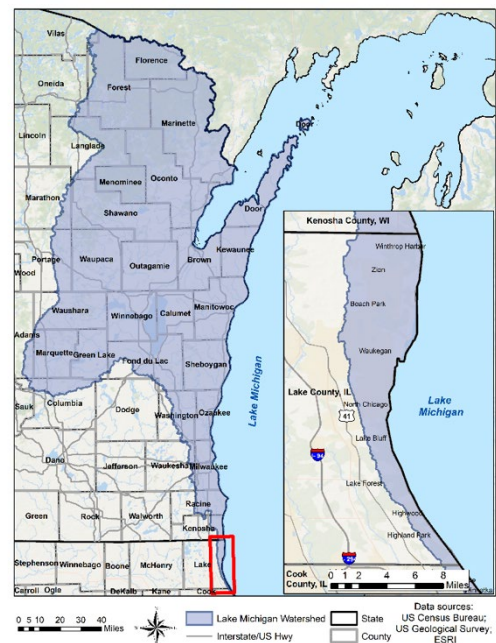
501(c)3 non-profit organizations, municipalities and local government agencies, tribes, and educational institutions are eligible for funding. Collaborations are encouraged, and projects that include sub-grants to partners are eligible.

We are primarily interested in funding project implementation, planning, design, community engagement, monitoring, staffing, and maintenance as well as applied research that will support, advance or test strategies for on-the-ground nature-based solutions.

Stand-alone advocacy, academic research, public education and general outreach efforts are not eligible for funding. Exceptions may be considered if these activities are a component of a larger project that advances near-term, on-the-ground nature-based solutions.

Additional examples of ineligible activities, projects and entities:

- Direct grants to for-profit entities or individuals
- Lobbying or political advocacy





- Land management practices without a clear and measurable impact on both carbon storage and water quality
- Renewable energy projects without a direct connection to water quality and/or habitat improvement
- Grey infrastructure solutions

Additional guidance for applicants:

- Successful local government requests will focus on showing proof of concept for systems change or be instructive for other local governments facing similar challenges or opportunities. Local government projects that include meaningful involvement from at least one community-based organization or nonprofit partner and leverage additional funding will be prioritized. Successful local government applications will avoid duplicating, overlapping or otherwise fulfilling what would be considered traditional government responsibilities.
- Successful applied research requests will be linked to a direct project and clearly articulate the next steps for using the data or research results to impact systems change. The Fund may consider applied research projects that provide information important in advancing catalytic, systems-level strategies that advance innovative climate change and water projects.

Funding Availability and Match

We anticipate having approximately \$1.5 million available for grant-making each year. In order to maximize the Daybreak Fund's impact and flexibility to grantees, we are not implementing grant award thresholds. The Daybreak Fund currently envisions making grants for the next three years, but we hope to extend our efforts beyond that time period. Matching funds are not required, but we appreciate efforts to demonstrate any additional investment in the project.

Grant Duration

We will consider individual projects as well as multi-year efforts (up to 3 years).

Grant Application Evaluation

Grant awards will be determined by program officers representing each participating funder. Additional input on applications will be collected from an independent technical team and community representatives from the region in order to gain insights, reduce bias, and check assumptions.

Timeline and Process

Potential applicants are strongly encouraged to send a one page summary of their grant idea to amber@fundforlakemichigan.org for initial feedback by May 12, 2023. This is not required, but is an opportunity to receive feedback on your idea and ensure it fits within the scope of our funding. Because



this is a new fund and we are still refining our strategies, this feedback opportunity will be instructive for both the funders and potential grantees and could help you submit a successful application or avoid a more intensive full proposal process.

April 14, 2023: Request for Proposal issued

April 18-June 15: Virtual office hours available Tuesdays and Thursdays. Schedule your virtual meeting [here](#).

May 12, 2023: Optional one page summaries due

June 15, 2023: Grant applications due

Week of September 5-8, 2023: Grants announced

September 11-22, 2023: Grants contracts finalized

September 25-29, 2023: Grants awarded

The Daybreak Fund hopes to establish connections with its grantees. To help us accomplish this mission, we will be available to answer your questions about this new grant opportunity via virtual office hours. Please set up a virtual meeting time [here](#). Additional times are available by request.

We anticipate a similar timeline for 2024 funding opportunities. We will continue to refine our priorities as the Daybreak Fund evolves. Any changes to our grantmaking practices will be shared on our website.

How to apply

All application materials must be submitted through the Fund for Lake Michigan's online application and reporting grant portal called [Foundant](#). Please follow these steps to access the application materials:

1. [Foundant](#) can be accessed at <https://www.grantinterface.com/Home/Logon?urlkey=lakemi>
2. If your organization has an existing account, log in by filling in the email address and password for your **organization's** account. If you cannot locate your credentials please contact Casey Eggleston at casey@fundforlakemichigan.org. Please do not create another account.
3. If your organization has not applied in the past, select "Create a New Account." This will prompt you to fill out a profile for your organization.
4. Applicants should **complete the application titled "The Daybreak Fund – 2023."**

Contact Information

All questions can be directed to Amber Meyer Smith, Fund for Lake Michigan Program Officer at amber@fundforlakemichigan.org.