

## 2016 Healthy Watersheds Consortium Grant Program

*Accelerating protection of America's healthy freshwater ecosystems and their watersheds*

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The U.S. Endowment for Forestry and Communities (Endowment) seeks applications for the 2016 Healthy Watersheds Consortium Grant Program. This opportunity closes March 14, 2016 at 5:00 p.m. EDT. Proposals received after this time may not be considered.

### Funding

Up to \$1.5 million is available for the 2016 initial grant round. Grants may be a subaward of federal financial assistance or non-federal funds, or a combination of both. Funding at about this level is anticipated to be available on an annual basis at or around this time each year through 2020. A review committee will make final project recommendations. Projects funded in this cycle must conclude no later than December 31, 2020.

### Program Goal

The Healthy Watersheds Consortium Grant Program goal is to accelerate strategic protection of healthy, freshwater ecosystems and their watersheds. This goal will be achieved by:

- Funding key projects identified in existing watershed protection, source water protection, green infrastructure, or other conservation plans;
- Building the sustainable organizational infrastructure, social support, and long-term funding commitments necessary to implement large-scale protection of healthy watersheds; and
- Supporting innovative or catalytic projects that may accelerate or broadly advance the field of practice for watershed protection efforts.

Subawards will be awarded in the following three categories. These categories are not rigid; they are simply meant to reflect the Healthy Watershed Consortium Grant Program's three primary approaches to watershed protection. Your proposal will be moved, if necessary, to the appropriate category without penalty. If you have questions about where your project idea best fits, please contact us to discuss.

- 1) **Watershed Action Projects** —Subawards for specific projects that fulfill components of an established watershed or source water plan or similar guiding document. These requests will typically come from a well-established organization or coalition with a proven record of accomplishment in the watershed and the capacity to sustain related work over the long-term. Watershed Action Projects may be proposed to occur within a specific HUC 12 subwatershed, but should be part of a broader watershed strategy developed at the HUC 8 scale or larger. In other words, site-specific projects must have benefits at a broader scale. Applicants may seek additional funding for new projects in the same watershed in future subaward cycles. (\$50,000 - \$200,000; one to three year subaward duration)
- 2) **Building Watershed Protection Capacity** —Funding for up to five years (and longer, subject to availability of funds) with funding renewed annually, based on performance. The objective of these subawards is to grow the organizational sustainability necessary for large-scale, long-term protection of healthy watersheds. These subawards are well-suited for coalescing groups or coalitions to work on watershed protection. (\$50,000/year - \$150,000/year over multiple years. For example, \$75,000/year could be requested for four years, for a total subaward of \$300,000)
- 3) **Advancing the State of Practice**—One-time subawards for new or experimental technologies, methods, or approaches to incentivize watershed protection that can be scaled to accelerate protection of healthy watersheds on a broader level. Training projects may be proposed if they

relate to gathering or exchanging information to advance the state of practice. Proposals must include a plan for scaling projects and disseminating information to relevant users. (\$50,000 - \$200,000; one to three year subaward duration).

### **Overview**

Funding for the Healthy Watersheds Consortium is provided by the Endowment and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Office of Water and Office of Wetlands, Oceans, and Watersheds.

The Healthy Watersheds Consortium Grant Program was conceived by EPA to identify and protect healthy, aquatic ecosystems and their watersheds. Funding will be considered for projects that:

- Focus on large-scale protection (state/interstate, basin, tribal, regional);
- Involve multiple watersheds that are adjacent or in a group;
- Implement protection-related activities in existing watershed, source water, or similar plans;
- Develop and/or implement large-scale green infrastructure projects;
- Create/expand organizational infrastructure to accelerate healthy watershed protection;
- Create/expand the social infrastructure to support and sustain healthy watershed protection;
- Develop mechanisms for securing financing necessary to implement protection projects;
- Engage watershed landowners in sustainable programs to protect healthy watersheds;
- Create sustainable landowner incentives for watershed protection;
- Develop sustainable land-use planning that protects healthy watersheds;
- Demonstrate or quantify the economic benefits of healthy watersheds;
- Demonstrate the human health (e.g. drinking water, fishable/swimmable water), recreation, and other benefits of healthy watersheds;
- Communicate the value of healthy watersheds to key constituencies to enhance protection;
- Assess and/or identify healthy watersheds;
- Develop watershed protection plans; and
- Develop and share information necessary for stakeholder groups to plan, implement, and assess healthy watershed protection.

### **Funding Restrictions**

Healthy Watershed Consortium Grant Program subawards may *not* be directly used for land acquisition, conservation easements, or habitat restoration, unless as smaller components of catalytic or innovation projects with clear, scalable applications. Funds may not be used for lobbying, fundraising, political advocacy, or litigation.

### **What is a Healthy Watershed?**

For the purposes of this program, a healthy watershed is one in which the hydrological, biological, and land-based functions of the ecosystem are largely intact. The EPA defines a healthy watershed as one in which natural land cover supports dynamic hydrologic and geomorphic processes within their natural range of variation (i.e., sediment storage and deposition), where there is habitat of sufficient size and connectivity to support native aquatic and riparian species, and where water quality is adequate to support healthy biological communities. For more information about EPA's literature on what constitutes a healthy watershed, visit the [Healthy Watershed Consortium's webpage](#). A healthy watershed may include natural, semi-natural, and well-managed lands.

The Healthy Watersheds Consortium Grant Program is less about the specific definition of what constitutes a healthy watershed and much more about effective approaches to protect them.

The goal of this Grant Program is to accelerate protection and enhancement of *healthy* watersheds. This doesn't mean the watershed has to be pristine. It may contain a variety of human land uses, but it should be in relatively good condition. Degraded systems in a matrix of healthier watersheds may be appropriate.

*It is up to applicants to present their case to the Healthy Watersheds Consortium Grant Program review committee that their watershed is healthy.* Information from a comparative watershed assessment or plan from a government agency or not-for-profit may be helpful for this purpose.

Projects to support *restoration* of degraded waters will be considered only within the context of enhancing an already healthy watershed. For example, if restoring a small area will make significant improvements for water quality, wildlife corridors, or hydrologic flow within a larger, otherwise healthy watershed, and if there are provisions for maintaining or protecting the restored area, such a project may qualify.

### **What does “Protection” Mean?**

For this Grant Program, protection refers to actions that conserve healthy aquatic ecosystems and the supporting natural and managed landscape and watershed processes, such as hydrology, that support them. The principle is to protect and sustain healthy watersheds so that they will continue to provide ecological services such as clean water, drinking water, habitat for fish and wildlife, recreation, and protection from natural hazards.

A healthy watershed may include natural, semi-natural, and well-managed lands, each of which could be worthy of protection.

Protection could mean buying land or using conservation easements to prevent conversion of a watershed to uses that would diminish its health. Healthy Watershed Consortium subawards may not be directly used for acquisition or easements, except as described in the “Funding Restrictions” section above. However, applications are encouraged for developing or supporting efforts that enable acquisitions or easements on a larger scale.

Protection could also mean creating programs that incentivize private landowners to enhance stewardship of their property over the long-term. For example, certification programs for forests, grasslands, and some agricultural systems could be an effective way to keep these working lands from degrading or being converted to other uses detrimental to watershed health and the health of the communities that depend on them. Delivering cost-share or education programs to landowners may also be an effective approach for large-scale watershed protection.

Protection should be systemic, at least long-term, and preferably in perpetuity.

The Healthy Watersheds Consortium Grant Program encourages creative, locally-developed approaches to watershed protection. It seeks to support cost-effective approaches for protecting healthy watersheds at a large scale. The review committee challenges applicants to propose protection strategies that best fit their watershed, state, or region.

Achieving large-scale protection of healthy watersheds may take decades. The Healthy Watershed Consortium Grant Program seeks to create and build the sustainable organizational infrastructure and financing mechanisms needed to help communities realize their healthy watershed protection goals over the long-term.

### **Multiple Values**

Watershed protection is a holistic endeavor. Healthy Watershed Consortium grants should benefit a wide range of values, including but not limited to water quality and quantity, source water and drinking water, wildlife, local economies, and recreation.

### **Letters of Support**

A key goal for the Healthy Watershed Consortium Grant Program is to enhance communication and cooperation among groups with similar interests. Effective partnerships are important and proposals should include a variety of partners. Applicants should provide at least three, but no more than five, letters from relevant partners demonstrating their awareness of and support for your project. Project partners should be explicit in describing how your proposed project integrates with and preferably leverages ongoing work in the watershed. Such groups might include State Departments of Natural Resources, Forestry, and Water Quality and Drinking Water Programs; land owners; tribal entities; state or regional offices of federal natural resource agencies; source water collaboratives; and non-governmental conservation groups with a significant presence in the watershed. A [sample letter of support](#) is available on the Healthy Watersheds Consortium Grant Program website. Letters of support should be attached to your application and sent as one file to [peter@usendowment.org](mailto:peter@usendowment.org); please do not have letters of support sent directly to Peter.

### **Partnerships**

If you are interested in watershed protection, but need help connecting with groups in your area or seek expertise not currently available to you, we can try to help introduce you to potential partners. Please contact us to discuss (Application Assistance, P. 5).

### **Metrics and Evaluation**

It is essential that applicants provide a practical, cost-effective approach for measuring the success of their efforts. This includes describing clear, specific objectives for your work, and the strategies, activities and outcomes necessary for your project to succeed. The application will guide you through a process for developing these parameters. Assistance is available to applicants to help develop these important tools for their projects. Additional information on defining [Goals, Hurdles, and Outcomes](#) is available on the Healthy Watersheds Consortium Grant Program website.

### **Watershed Scale**

The Healthy Watershed Consortium Grant Program seeks protection at larger scales. The minimum scale considered for funding are projects designed to apply within a HUC 8 subwatershed planning unit. Activities that are tied to implementation of a larger-scale plan are most desirable.

### **Geographic Eligibility**

Work must be in the 50 United States, Tribal Lands, the District of Columbia, and U.S. Territories.

### **Matching Fund Requirements**

Applicants should provide at least 25% of the total funds requested (i.e. the applicant's minimum must equal at least one-third of the funds requested). This may include cash donations or in-kind

contributions from third-parties and allowable costs incurred by the applicant in the course of the project. The Endowment's [published, maximum indirect rate is 15%](#).

Because Healthy Watershed Consortium subawards may include non-federal (Endowment) and/or federal funds (EPA), it is important to clearly state the origin of proposed match in the application. The Endowment may decrease the matching requirement to as low as 10% if the applicant can demonstrate in writing that fiscal circumstances are constrained to such an extent that fulfilling the matching funds requirement would impose undue hardship. NOTE: Applicants are strongly urged to request decreased match requirements in writing prior to submitting a full proposal. Submit your request to [peter@usendowment.org](mailto:peter@usendowment.org).

### **Eligible Applicants**

Not-for-profit 501(c)(3) organizations, for-profit companies, tribes, intertribal consortia, interstates, state, and local government agencies including water utilities and wastewater facilities, and colleges and universities are eligible for funding. Unincorporated individuals and federal agencies are not eligible. Public/private partnerships are particularly desirable.

The Endowment does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, or age in any of its programs or activities.

### **2016 Process Schedule**

The Endowment will coordinate a proposal review committee and will engage successful applicants in subaward contracting at the earliest possible time.

Proposal Deadline:	March 14, 2016
Proposal Review Completed:	Week of April 18, 2016
Applicants notified:	Week of April 25, 2016

Subaward paperwork should be completed within four to eight weeks after notification unless complications arise.

### **Application Assistance**

For questions or clarification please contact Peter Stangel ([peter@usendowment.org](mailto:peter@usendowment.org); 404-915-2763) or Jeff Lerner ([jlerner@americanforests.org](mailto:jlerner@americanforests.org); 202-236-1883).

Informational webinars will be scheduled—check the Healthy Watersheds Consortium Grant Program [webpage for updates](#) and other helpful information. Answers to common application questions will be posted on the webpage for your reference. A Sample Application is also posted on the [webpage](#).

### **Proposal Submission**

Only proposals submitted on the Healthy Watershed Consortium Grant Program [application form](#) will be considered. Submit the application form and other supporting materials via email to [peter@usendowment.org](mailto:peter@usendowment.org). Receipt of your application will be acknowledged within one business day. If you don't hear from us, send an email to [peter@usendowment.org](mailto:peter@usendowment.org).

### **Post-Grant Support**

The goal of this Grant Program is to help communities protect their healthy watersheds. The Endowment's and EPA's staffs are committed to our subawardee's success. We and our consultants are

available to support subawardees in all aspects of their work. We seek to be active partners in problem-solving and information dissemination. Funding has been reserved to secure the services of experts to help improve the effectiveness and scalability of protection projects. These services may include, but are not limited to, communications, technical review, monitoring design and implementation, group facilitation, and project design.

**Grantee Annual Meetings**

To maximize effective project implementation and to enhance information-sharing, subawardees are invited to participate in one or more Healthy Watershed Consortium meetings. subawardees will be actively engaged in setting the agenda for these meetings to ensure that their time is well-spent. Travel funding will be built into grant awards.

**Criteria for Evaluating Proposals**

There are six primary criteria for evaluating proposals, with one criterion specific to each of the three grant categories. Total points available = 100 + 5 bonus pts.

- 1) To what extent has the applicant shown theirs is a healthy watershed? (Yes or No).
- 2) To what degree has the applicant’s treatment of the Success Factors demonstrated that the proposed project has the ingredients to be successful, or could have them in the near future?
- 3) To what degree does the applicant have the experience, personnel and partnerships to accomplish the proposed work?
- 4) To what extent will the goals, hurdles, strategies and activities lead to accelerated watershed protection? To what degree has the applicant proposed practical metrics for measuring project success?
- 5) Is the budget sufficient to accomplish the proposed project? Is there strong potential for leveraging funds to improve the project’s cost-effectiveness? (5 pt. bonus.)
- 6a) For Watershed Action Projects: To what extent does the proposed work demonstrate implementation of an existing watershed plan or clear impact on watershed protection?
- 6b) For Building Watershed Protection Capacity: To what degree has the applicant demonstrated a need and readiness for a long term commitment on watershed protection?
- 6c) For Advancing the State of Practice: To what extent can the proposed work be scaled and does it demonstrate transferability to other watershed protection programs?

<b>Healthy Watersheds Consortium Proposal Evaluation</b>	<b>Watershed Action Projects (WAP)</b>	<b>Building Watershed Protection Capacity (BWPC)</b>	<b>Advancing the State of Practice (ASP)</b>
Healthy Watershed	Y/N	Y/N	Y/N
Success Factors	10 pts.	10 pts.	10 pts.
Goals, Hurdles & Outcomes	35 pts.	35 pts.	35 pts.
Budget & Leverage	15 pts.	15 pts.	15 pts.
Experience, Personnel & Partners	15 pts.	15 pts.	15 pts.
Implementation & Impact	25 pts.		
Need & Readiness		25 pts.	
Scale & Transferability			25 pts.