



GULF PARTNERSHIP

PROJECT ASSISTANCE FUND

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

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Overview

The Partnership for Gulf Coast Land Conservation (Gulf Partnership) is a collaboration of national and regional land trusts working in the Gulf of Mexico Region to enhance land protection and conservation in priority landscapes. Our mission is to work together across the five Gulf of Mexico states to increase the pace, quality, and permanence of voluntary land and water conservation in the coastal region.

The Project Assistance Fund (PAF) Request for Proposals (RFP) is to support the upfront due diligence costs our land trust partners need to fully develop land conservation projects in the coastal region with important public recreation, wildlife habitat, resilience, and water quality benefits for local communities within the Gulf States.

Program Priorities

The PAF program goal is to enhance land protection and conservation in priority landscapes of the Gulf by providing up-front due diligence support to organizations working on the front lines of land conservation along the Gulf States.

Geographic Focus

The project is located within the Gulf States of Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi, or Texas, and preferably within the boundaries of the Gulf Partnership Conservation Vision. See map and more details at: <https://geoproject.hpc.msstate.edu/SCVTool/>

Award Size

Gulf Partnership partners implementing fee acquisition or conservation easement projects may receive subawards of up to \$50,000 to complete appraisals, appraisal reviews, title exams, environmental and baseline studies, surveys, closings, and other due diligence necessary for conservation activity. Stewardship funds may also be considered and are further defined in the eligibility section. Salary, indirect, and administrative expenses are not reimbursable.

Budget

Use the budget table in the application form to submit your budget. Be sure to include:

1. Specific amount requested.
2. What the award funds/resources will be specifically used for.
3. Explain how your figures were derived.
4. List any matching, leveraged, or cost-share funds to be utilized.
5. Include the total amount of the project, including land costs.

Receiving Award Funds

Award payments are reimbursable following satisfactory completion of all activities, and submission of reporting requirements. Advanced payment or partial reimbursement prior to completion of services will not be permitted.

Procurement

If the applicant chooses to specifically identify proposed Contractor(s) for Services, an award by Gulf Partnership to the applicant does not constitute its express written authorization for the applicant to procure such specific services non-competitively. When procuring goods and services, Gulf Partnership recipients must follow documented procurement procedures that reflect applicable laws and regulations.

Matching Contributions

Applicants are not required to provide match. However, any federal or non-federal leveraged sources should be documented to demonstrate the totality of work involved.

Project Metrics

All awardees will be required to provide acreage estimates, along with any associated backup documents to verify these figures. In addition to the total acreage protected, awardees should indicate the types of habitats and their associated acreage when feasible.

Optional metrics include outreach/education, along with any planned habitat restoration activities on-site. If applicants anticipate any other environmental and/or social outcomes of the proposed project, please describe and quantify those services within the proposal narrative.

Eligibility

Applicant Eligibility

To be eligible for the fund, applicants must meet the following conditions:

1. They are a 501(c)(3) member of the Gulf Partnership in good standing (annual dues current) and maintain membership through an award performance period.
2. They have provided geospatial data (i.e., maps) on all the conservation easements they hold to the National Conservation Easement Database.
3. They have adopted the Land Trust Alliance standards and practices.
4. As this program will award grants of Federal financial assistance funds, applicants must be able to comply with the OMB guidance and procurement standards of 2 CFR 200 (OMB Uniform Guidance).

Proposal Eligibility

To be eligible for the fund, projects must meet the following criteria:

1. Have applied or intend to apply for (CE or fee title) acquisition funding. The applicant must clearly explain this in the application.
2. The project is located within the Gulf states of Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi, or Texas, and preferably within the boundaries of the Gulf Partnership Conservation Vision. See map and more details at: <https://geoproject.hpc.msstate.edu/SCVTool/>
3. Organizations who do not have current/active PAF agreements will be given preference, so long as the proposal meets award criteria. Organizations have no limit on the number of proposals submitted but the Gulf Partnership may limit the number of awards per organization depending on available program funding.

4. Completed application submitted in accordance with these *Guidelines*. Eligible costs for grant funds may include, but are not limited to, appraisals, appraisal reviews, surveys and legal descriptions, title reviews, legal review, baseline documentation reports, recording fees, and environmental assessments. General overhead, land costs, and staff time are not eligible for grant funds but can be documented as match.
5. Conservation and/or Stewardship funds for annual monitoring and legal defense will be eligible for reimbursement on a case-by-case basis. All applicants should reach out to info@gulfpartnership.org prior to submitting an application to check for availability.
6. Project expenses to be reimbursed must be incurred after the period of performance as defined in the proposal.

Evaluation Criteria

Proposals are evaluated by a review committee composed of Gulf Partnership staff, board members, and other conservation organizations for eligibility and compliance with criteria. Projects will be ranked in accordance with alignment for program goals and priorities. A general scoring rubric is provided below for reference.

Scoring Rubric

1. Project Description/Conservation Vision: The proposal clearly defines the project, activities, and resources for proposed acquisition. It demonstrates a clear understanding of science and/or best practices related to conservation while aligning with this RFP and other relevant conservation plans. Proposal aligns with Gulf Partnership's Strategic Conservation Vision, and/or clearly demonstrates regional/resource needs through regional conservation plans. – *Maximum Points: 10*
2. Resource/Community Benefits: Proposal should define regional and environmental outcomes, aligning local species, habitat, and/or social needs to broader land-use and/or climate resiliency goals. Proposals should also demonstrate long-term stewardship plans for acquisition/easement. – *Maximum Points: 10*
3. Feasibility: The proposal must demonstrate landowner approval and have a clear description of the potential for capital funding for acquisition/easement. When feasible, proposals should provide notification of award, commitment, etc. – *Maximum Points: 5*
4. Metrics: Objectives/Metrics are quantitative and clearly defined. They are also supportive of RFP requirements and aligned with regional conservation plans. – *Maximum Points: 5*
5. Project Timeline: The timeline of proposed activities is clearly defined, including a long-term timeline/description for acquisition and/or conservation easement. – *Maximum Points: 5*
6. Budget: Cost estimates are appropriate, justified, and reasonable for meeting the desired project objectives and required timelines. – *Maximum Points: 10*

7. Completeness and Accuracy: All attachments/forms completed. Project objectives are clear, concise, and outline specific goals which are linked to milestones/timelines for project completion. – *Maximum Points: 5*

Total Point Score: 50

Timeline

Request for Proposals can be submitted anytime throughout the year and will be reviewed on a rolling basis. All work is expected to be completed within 12 months of the award. An extension can be requested and will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. However, the Gulf Partnership is under no obligation to offer an extension, and subaward recipients would be expected to demonstrate significant and unforeseen challenges that prevented project execution.

Publicity and Acknowledgement of Support

Award recipients will be required to grant Gulf Partnership the right and authority to publicize the project and Gulf Partnership's financial support for the grant in press releases, publications, and other public communications. Recipients may also be asked by Gulf Partnership to provide high-resolution (minimum 300 dpi) photographs depicting the project.

Compliance Requirements

As may be applicable, successful applicants may be required to comply with federal, state, or local requirements and obtain all necessary permits and clearances. Documentation of compliance with these regulations must be approved before initiating activities that disturb or alter habitat or other features of the project site(s). Applicants should budget time and resources to obtain the needed approvals.

Reporting Requirements

A standardized reporting form will be included with all award agreements. The report narrative should describe the project's status and any delays relative to the timeline. Included in the report must be a list of any products from the project (e.g., appraisals, surveys, etc.) and an updated budget showing all actual expenditures.

A semi-annual report will be due approximately 6-months after the award, and the completed form will be due 30 days after the completion of the project.

How to Apply

Please submit all proposals, including supporting materials, electronically. Compile all application materials into a single .pdf for electronic submission to info@gulfpartnership.org using the form provided. Applications will not be accepted after the submission deadline.

Questions

Direct all inquiries to:

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Telephone: (757)-292-6718