

# **From Student to Stewards: Student Community-Based Water Stewardship Projects**

## **REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS:**

### **I. Overview**

The State of Michigan launched the From Students to Stewards (FS2S) Initiative in 2019 to grow future water stewards, leaders, and decision-makers in Michigan. The FS2S Initiative is a collaborative effort by several state-level partners, including the Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy's (EGLE) Office of the Great Lakes (OGL), the Environmental Education Program, and the Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity's [MiSTEM](#) Network.

Approximately \$75,000 will be awarded in \$5,000-\$10,000 grants. The total number of projects funded will vary based on successful applicants' budgets. This grant program will be funded by the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative and administered by the OGL with support from EGLE's Environmental Education Program. The Environmental Education Program will also provide project assistance to schools throughout the duration of their projects.

This is a request for proposals (RFP) for student-centered water stewardship projects that address local water issues. This funding is intended to support students working with local community members and organizations to develop environmental projects that create and implement solutions to address a relevant local water issue.

The OGL is accepting proposals from eligible entities that aim to accomplish three goals within the project period:

1. Develop and implement a problem-, project-, and place-based (3P-based) learning opportunity focused on local water issues that provides K-12 students and educators with opportunities to engage firsthand with Great Lakes ecosystems and increase their Great Lakes Literacy.
2. Facilitate a student-centered, 3P-based, stewardship action project that addresses a local freshwater challenge, incorporates a related field-based activity, builds youth problem-solving skills, and includes partnerships with community organizations.
3. Incorporate elements that support development of the future water workforce through building student awareness of career pathways and providing workforce development experiences such as meeting water professionals through community partnerships.

### **II. Background**

According to [Sustaining Michigan's Water Heritage: A Strategy for the Next Generation](#), a 30-year road map to protect, restore, and sustain Michigan's water resources that was published by the OGL, many Michigan residents lack basic knowledge about the Great Lakes and watersheds, and how people's actions directly affect water resources. Integrating water literacy principles into State of Michigan standards tied to Science,

Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) across all grade levels in accordance with the state's [STEM Strategy](#) is a state-wide opportunity to build freshwater literacy and grow lifelong stewards. Michigan's STEM strategy also prioritizes 3P-based approaches to STEM education. In addition, statewide strategies recommend coordinating, delivering, and supporting ongoing freshwater-focused professional development for Michigan K-12 educators.

Previous phases of the statewide FS2S Initiative have made progress toward growing the next generation of water stewards utilizing 3P-based approaches. Phase I focused on institutionalizing 3P-based freshwater education in K-12 schools by providing grants to support incorporation of Great Lakes and Water Literacy Principles into curriculum, train teachers in 3P-based pedagogy, and integrate 3P-based learning into the school improvement planning process. Phase II expanded this work by providing targeted support to schools just beginning this work. The current phase, Phase III, now focuses on supporting the implementation of 3P-based pedagogy by providing the financial support schools often need to provide the necessary firsthand experiences and project implementation that characterize 3P-based learning. This support includes this small grant program for K-12 schools to support student-centered water stewardship projects.

### **III. Deliverables**

The deliverables of the project must include:

1. A 1-2 page fact sheet that contains project information, number of students, and photos or graphics. A template will be provided to successful applicants.
2. A short final narrative report that includes the information below (5 pages maximum)
  - a. Number of students and teachers engaged in the hands-on stewardship projects,
  - b. Description of activities conducted and how they incorporate all components of [3P learning](#) to address local water issues,
  - c. Description of community engagement and partnerships and how this project advances the development of the future water workforce, and
  - d. Ideas on opportunities or challenges to expanding or continuing this work beyond the completed project.

Providing separate high-resolution photos in addition to the report is highly preferred. By providing pictures to EGLE, you are granting permission that the photos may be used in future publication materials. Providing images of students also assumes the applicant organization has acquired all permissions to share and use such images.

## IV. Funding Information

### 1. Who Can Apply

#### ❖ Eligible Applicants

- Schools and school districts
- Local Education Agencies
- Intermediate School Districts
- Public School Academies
- Tribal Education Agencies not administered by the Bureau of Indian Education

**Note: Grants cannot be awarded to individuals.**

#### ❖ Ineligible Applicants

- For-profit organizations
- Individual teachers, educators, faculty members, students, or community members
- Individual schools that are not nonprofit organizations
- Tribal education agencies that are administered by the Bureau of Indian Education
- Nonprofit 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

In addition, an applicant for whom any of the following conditions existed in the 12 months prior to the application deadline for this RFP is not eligible for funding:

- EGLE grant contract terminated
- Unresolved EGLE enforcement actions
- History of inability to manage or meet EGLE contractual terms and conditions
- Listed on the federal/debarment list ([sam.gov](http://sam.gov))

### 2. Grant Amount

A total of \$75,000 will be awarded through individual grants of \$5,000-\$10,000.

### 3. Match Requirement

Funding match is not required but will be considered. Match may be in the form of cash, in-kind services, or donations.

### 4. Project Award Period

Projects will be evaluated on project readiness and feasibility for completion within the time frame of the 2026-2027 school year.

### 5. Ineligible Uses for Grant Funds

This grant cannot be used to fund:

- Professional development activities
- The purchase of general classroom equipment

- Large-scale purchasing of equipment
- Projects that involve earth disturbance or construction activities

Expenses should be appropriate for the project tasks and built into the proposal budget.

#### 6. Application Deadline

Complete applications must be received no later than **Monday, April 13, 2026, 5:00 pm Eastern Standard Time**. Applications received after the deadline of April 13, 2026, will not be considered.

#### 7. Application Submittal

Applications must be submitted by email with the email subject “FS2S – Student Community-based Water Stewardship Projects.” Attach the application package in a Portable Document Format (PDF). The combined size of the files attached to the email cannot exceed 10 megabytes. Applications must be sent to:

Jeanine Barks  
[BarksJ@Michigan.gov](mailto:BarksJ@Michigan.gov)  
517-275-1302

If you are unable to submit applications by email, please contact Jeanine Barks to make alternative arrangements.

## V. Information for Applicants

Applicants can visit the OGL’s [Stewarding the Great Lakes webpage](#), [EGLE Classroom, MiSTEM’s Toolbox](#), and [Freshwater Literacy and Stewardship playbook](#) for more background information and additional resources on 3P-based freshwater education and Great Lakes literacy and stewardship. Schools can also apply for and receive FS2S Wheels to Water pilot program funding concurrently to reimburse up to \$1,000 of qualifying field trip-related transportation expenses.

Proposal information will not be kept confidential. Grant proposals are considered public information under the Michigan Freedom of Information Act, PA 442 of 1976, as amended.

Successful applicants will receive notification via email by June 26, 2026, that their application was approved. Successful applicants will be required to enter into a grant agreement with EGLE with standard terms and conditions which are not subject to modifications. Failure of a successful applicant to accept these obligations will result in cancellation of the grant award.

Successful applicants will also be required to provide proof of a successful financial audit for a period ending within the 24 months immediately preceding the proposal due date, April 13, 2026. Therefore, to be eligible under this RFP the end date of the audited period must be after April 13, 2024.

## **Application Package**

Applications can be no more than 10 single-sided pages in length with text no smaller than 12-point font size and standard ½ -inch margins. Maps and illustrations may be included but will be subject to the overall application length limit. A cover letter signed by an authorized representative of the applicant on the applicant's letterhead must accompany the application. Applications should be addressed as described above.

## **Application Cover Page**

The cover page should list the project title and information about the applicant. It must clearly state the grant amount requested, match amount provided, if relevant, and total project cost, if greater than the sum of the grant and match amounts. Information about the applicant must include:

- Applicant agency or organization name and mailing address
- Authorized representative's name, email address, and telephone number
- Applicant Federal ID number
- Applicant Unique Entity Identifier (UEI)
- Name, title, and contact information of primary contact person, if different from that of applicant's authorized representative
- Name, title, and contact information of the Business / Financial contact person, if different from that of applicant's authorized representative and primary contact
- School District
- Congressional District, State Senate District, and State House District numbers of applicant's location
- SIGMA Vendor ID number

## **Proposed Project Summary**

Provide a brief summary (300 words or less) of the proposed project including the name of the applicant organization and partners, potential student activities, the objectives and primary outcomes of the project, engagement strategies for community partners, connections to work force development, etc.

## **Detailed Proposed Project Description**

The following information is required in the detailed proposed project description:

- Project scope, goals, and objectives, description of local water issue addressed, why the project is needed, and how it addresses the focus of the grant request.
- A brief overview of planned approach and methodology for carrying out the project.
- Explain how the project goes beyond classroom instruction. How does the project address each component of [3P Learning](#) – problem, project, place? Describe the associated field-based activity.
- List of deliverables and how success will be evaluated.
- Describe the outcomes that will be achieved if the project is funded.
- Describe how the project will incorporate community partnerships and provide STEM-career pathway exposure.

- List the education personnel, including their role in the project and any prior experience working in this domain, and how many students will be involved in this project.
- Source of match, if applicable.

**Project Tasks and Schedule**

Display timelines for major tasks, target milestones for critical intermediate and final products, and key project outcomes/deliverables. The schedule must show that all tasks will be completed within the project period. Progress will be reported semi-annually according to the table below. Program staff will also schedule quarterly check-ins with grantees to support grantee success.

Tasks	[DATE]	[DATE]	[DATE]	[DATE]	Outcome/Deliverable
1.					
2.					
3.					
4.					
5.					

**Organizational Capability**

Describe the qualifications of the individual(s) anticipated to work on the project and the past experience of the applicant in managing grant projects. If applicable, provide a brief overview of individual(s)' publications on related topics.

**Budget Narrative**

Please provide a budget narrative that briefly describes the purpose of each line item in the budget form below.

**Detailed Project Budget**

Please download and use the budget form that can be found on the [From Students to Stewards](#) webpage. The completed budget spreadsheet file should be included in the email with the application and will not count toward the 10-page application limit. Reimbursement of indirect costs is optional and at the discretion of the grantee. Should the grantee choose to request reimbursement of indirect costs, they may use their current Federal Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA), a negotiated rate with the state, or up to 15 percent of Modified Total Direct Costs if no NICRA is present. If you are using your NICRA, please attach a copy of your most recent NICRA letter.

**Project Outcomes and Deliverables**

Provide a description of the expected results of the project and project deliverables. Include the number of students and teachers that will be directly engaged in this project.

**VI. Attachments**

- Proof of successful financial audit
- Proof that applicant is not on the federal/debarment list (sam.gov)

## **VIII. Evaluation Criteria**

All applicants will be required to describe how the student community-based water stewardship project they propose will provide students with hands on learning opportunities that will increase their knowledge about local water issues, careers involved in solving these issues, and how to work towards solutions by working with local community partners that are already engaged on water issues. The review criteria will reward applicants depending on the project's impacts and ability to engage students in the stewardship during the grant period.

The OGL invites interested applicants to contact program staff early in the proposal development process for assistance and guidance. Complete applications will be evaluated for funding based on the following considerations:

- Number of students and teachers involved
- Project's potential to address a local water challenge
- Extent to which the project engages with the local community
- Extent to which the project advances the development of the future water workforce
- Overall quality and clarity of the application
- Organizational capability of the applicant to complete the project as proposed
- Project readiness and feasibility for completion within the specified grant period
- Cost-effectiveness
- Measurability of project results, if applicable
- Diverse distribution of funds across geography, community types (rural, urban, suburban), and socioeconomic groups

## **IX. Reporting Requirements and Funding Disbursement**

The grantee must complete and submit semi-annual financial and progress reports according to a form and format prescribed by the State and must include supporting documentation of eligible project expenses.

## **X. Program Contact**

If you have any questions or comments regarding the program or the application process, please contact:

Dr. Katie Mika  
Office of the Great Lakes  
Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy  
517-643-6790  
[MikaK2@Michigan.gov](mailto:MikaK2@Michigan.gov)