Economic Evaluation of Nature-Based Solutions Implemented for Stormwater Management in the Great Lakes Basin

Request for Proposals (RFP) – March 13, 2026

Great Lakes Commission
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Overview

The Great Lakes Commission (GLC) is seeking proposals to carry out an economic evaluation of community benefits using diverse case studies of nature-based solutions (NBS)[1] for stormwater management implemented in rural, suburban, and urban communities across the Great Lakes basin. The overall goal of the project is to demonstrate the economic, environmental, and societal impacts of using NBS and to identify methods for improving acceptance and use of these techniques.

Funding: Up to $200,000 is available to implement the scope of work

Project Timeline: June 2026 - February 2027

Proposal Deadline: April 30, 2026, 6:00 p.m. Eastern Time

Contact: Jill Estrada, Project Manager, Great Lakes Commission, jestrada@glc.org

Applicant Eligibility

Any individual or teams of researchers (applicant) with relevant skillsets and experience, including (but not limited to) sociologists, economists, behavioral economists, data analysts, and statisticians are invited to submit proposals. Teams may be composed of multiple people from a single organization or through collaborations between multiple organizations. Applicants may have backgrounds in academia, or the public, private, or non-profit sectors and will be judged primarily on the strength of their knowledge, experience, and quantitative and qualitative skills that directly relate to project tasks.

Each applicant must have the ability to enter into a contract with the GLC and provide administrative capacity to submit reports of project expenses, activities, and other supporting documentation as required. Applicants must be eligible to receive federal funding and must be able to comply with all applicable federal, state, and local laws, rules, ordinances, and regulations in the performance of this project.

In compliance with state and federal regulations, Women and Minority Business Enterprises (WMBE), Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Businesses (SDVOB), and others, are encouraged to apply.

Background

The GLC is an interstate compact agency established under state and U.S. federal law and dedicated to promoting a strong economy, healthy environment and high quality of life for the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence region and its residents. In accordance with actions identified to meet the clean and safe water goal as described in the GLC's *Strategic Plan,* the GLC relaunched the Great Lakes Stormwater Collaborative (Collaborative) in 2025 to provide assistance and support communities interested in green

[1] For the purpose of this project, nature-based solutions are identified as stormwater management practices that are inspired or supported by natural processes (e.g. permeable pavements, bioretention systems, two-stage ditches, green roofs, etc.)

infrastructure and improving stormwater management practices. The Collaborative connects stormwater program managers from Great Lakes states and provinces and coordinates with coastal resilience programs, Indigenous Nations, academic research institutions, local utilities, and regional organizations. The overall goal of the Collaborative is to strengthen the expertise of state and provincial agency staff and other regional partners and create products useful to leaders in the Great Lakes region. The outcomes of this project will provide the Collaborative with data-driven results that can be used to inform leaders and stormwater managers throughout the Great Lakes basin about the tangible benefits and impacts of implementing nature-based solutions for stormwater management.

The GLC will facilitate an economic evaluation project team comprised of Collaborative members to provide valuable input and guidance to the selected applicant. The project team will offer its expertise and knowledge about stormwater management practices and policy to guide the selected applicant in identifying case studies, compiling relevant data, and considering supplemental benefit impact analyses.

The project is also consistent with goals, recommended actions, and recommended outputs of the GLC's *Action Plan for a Resilient Great Lakes Basin*; the GLC's Standing Committee on Climate Resilience will provide occasional feedback to the consultant in collaboration with the economic evaluation project team.

Scope of Work

Objectives

The overall goal of the project is to demonstrate the economic, environmental, and societal impacts of using NBS and to identify methods for improving acceptance and use of these techniques. The requested analysis will highlight up to 20 case studies that represent a variety of NBS projects across the Great Lakes basin, including those from urban, suburban, and rural communities of varying population size. Results of the evaluation will provide a comprehensive understanding of the benefits associated with the use of sustainable stormwater management practices that could be used to incentivize municipal leaders to invest in the use of NBS. Following analysis, the project team will develop outreach materials that not only showcase quantitative beneficial results but also provide a public-friendly narrative about each case study.

Research Questions

Proposals should describe how the applicant plans to address the following primary research questions:

1. What are the environmental, economic, and societal impacts of implementing nature-based solutions for stormwater management?
2. How does the Net Present Value (NPV) of green infrastructure fluctuate between 2-year and 10-year design storms, and what does this reveal about the optimal scale for cost-effective implementation?
3. What is the net present value and benefit cost ratio of each case study project?
4. Does the life-cycle cost outweigh the value of the case study project?
5. Does the value of the case study project help reduce the local government costs of stormwater management/regulation? (if data is available)

6. Does the estimated benefits value meet or exceed the intended purpose?

Project Tasks

Task 1: Identification of Case Studies

The selected applicant will be provided access to an ArcGIS map and data for an initial list of NBS projects compiled from the Collaborative's network and existing databases. The project team may request that additional sources be used to supplement NBS projects or information about selected case studies.

The selected applicant will attend monthly project team meetings during the contract period and will begin by working with the project team to develop screening criteria that apply the overall goals of the study to the list of NBS projects mentioned above. Once a refined list has been produced, the selected applicant and project team will identify up to twenty case studies that show broad geographic distribution across the Great Lakes basin and the rural-urban spectrum, demographic representation, and a variety of funding mechanisms and stormwater management histories. If a gap in representation is identified, the selected applicant will assist the project team with sourcing additional NBS projects to be evaluated. Projects selected to serve as case studies must also have project leads willing to provide information needed for the analysis and to develop outreach materials.

Task 2: Use of GSI Impact Hub Calculator

The GSI Impact Hub Calculator is a tool developed by One Water Econ to provide a comprehensive analysis of potential green stormwater infrastructure projects. The calculator uses a combination of project-specific data to evaluate the total present value benefits associated with each project. Input data are categorized by the following:

1. Project and Site Information
2. Stormwater Management Goal
3. BMP Selection
4. Benefit-Specific Inputs
5. Economic Assumptions

The following benefit categories are evaluated in the tool:

- Avoided infrastructure costs
- Avoided replacement costs
- Energy savings
- Water supply
- Air quality
- Property values
- Habitat/Biodiversity
- Heat stress
- Recreation
- Water quality
- Green jobs
- Carbon reduction

The selected applicant will use the GSI Impact Hub Calculator to perform an analysis for each case study using data collected during the initial task. Value benefits and cost estimate outputs from the tool are to be detailed in a preliminary summary report for review by the project team. This report shall also describe limitations of the data used, identify economic values (qualitative or quantitative) not provided by the tool,

and offer recommendations for next steps to be taken to further refine economic valuation of NBS beyond the scope of this task. The selected applicant is expected to be familiar with the GSI Impact Hub Calculator and include potential supplemental analyses in their proposal.

Task 3: Benefit Impact Analysis

The selected applicant will be expected to attend biannual meetings of the Collaborative's Leadership Team (occurring approximately every six months) to provide project updates and respond to feedback about deliverables. Following submission and review of the preliminary report, the selected applicant will be expected to perform additional benefit impact analyses to supplement results provided by the GSI Impact Hub Calculator. The project team will work with the selected applicant to determine which supplemental analyses submitted in the applicant's proposal fit within the confines of the project's scope and budget.

Task 4: Final Report and Communications

The selected applicant will submit a final report that summarizes analytical outcomes, methods, data sources, and findings related to the six primary research questions outlined herein. Raw data is to be provided in an appendix to the report. The report should also include recommendations for how stormwater management programs can better track individual project outputs to increase adoption of nature-based solutions and a summary of research tools and metrics that can be used. The selected applicant will present project findings during a Leadership Team meeting, at a future Great Lakes Stormwater Collaborative convening, and at a future Great Lakes Stormwater Collaborative webinar. Lastly, the selected applicant will review outreach materials developed by the GLC and project team to ensure that project findings are well represented.

Timeline and Deliverables

The selected applicant will be required to complete the following deliverables:

- A preliminary report detailing results from the GSI Impact Hub Calculator for each of the case studies, an analysis of limitations of the data used, economic values not provided by the tool, as well as recommendations for further benefit impact analyses.
- A final report that summarizes analytical outcomes, methods, and data sources, and findings related to the six primary research questions outlined herein. Raw data is to be provided in an appendix to the report.
- Recommendations for how stormwater management programs can better track individual project outputs to increase adoption of nature-based solutions and a summary of research tools and metrics that can be used. These recommendations should be part of the final report or a stand-alone document that references the more detailed final report.
- Participation in monthly project team calls, and biannual meetings (occurring approximately every six months) of the Leadership Team during the contract period.
- A presentation of project findings during a Leadership Team meeting and/or a meeting of the GLC's Standing Committee on Climate Resilience.

- At least one presentation of project findings at a future Great Lakes Stormwater Collaborative convening.
- At least one presentation of project findings at a future Great Lakes Stormwater Collaborative webinar.
- Review of outreach materials developed by the GLC and project team.

A general timeline of key deliverables is as follows:

Task	Timeline	Milestone
Task 1: Identification of Case Studies	June – July 2026	Final list of up to 20 case studies with all relevant data compiled
Task 2: Use of GSI Impact Hub Calculator	August to October 2026	Preliminary Report
Task 3: Benefit Impact Analysis	November 2026 to February 2027	Final Report and Communications

Desired Outcomes

- Increased understanding of the use of sustainable stormwater management practices across the Great Lakes basin.
- Increased knowledge of tangible benefits that may support the adoption of nature-based solutions.

Submission of Proposals and Selection Process

Electronic submissions are required. To be considered, submissions must be received before 6:00 PM Eastern on Thursday, April 30, 2026. Please submit proposals by email to: Jill Estrada (jestrada@glc.org). Please include the following exact wording in the subject of the email message: **Economic Evaluation of Nature-Based Solutions Proposal**.
Questions received after April 15, 2026 will not be addressed.

Key Dates	
Deadline for questions about the RFP	**April 15, 2026**
Final deadline for RFP submission	**April 30, 2026**
Notification of award	**May 31, 2026**
Finalize contract between GLC and selected applicant	**June 15, 2026**
Begin work	**June 16, 2026**
Submit final deliverables	**February 26, 2027**

Proposal Requirements

Proposals that fail to meet these requirements will be disqualified. Proposals must be no longer than twelve (12) pages. Appendices totaling no more than 10 additional pages are allowed and should include resumes or CVs for personnel that will carry out the work. GLC will not accept any additional supplemental materials. Copies of submittals may be provided to members of the project team as part of the selection process and should be considered non-confidential. Applicants shall identify all necessary tasks and the expertise required to complete their work. Applicants responding to this RFP shall include in their proposal:

• A narrative describing how the applicant will address the project objectives, research questions and tasks outlined in this RFP, including a timeline and deliverables.

• Organization of their project team (including any subcontractors).

• Relevant background and experience of the applicant and any subcontractors.

• A description of professional qualifications (including qualifications for any subcontractors) skills, abilities, key personnel, experience, availability6, and other distinguishing qualities.

• Disclosure of any limitations, such as conflicts of interest, that may affect the applicant's ability to carry out the proposed work.

• A minimum of two (2) references with contact information. References must have direct, firsthand knowledge of the applicant's ability to perform work under this RFP.

• A proposed budget and estimated costs to complete the scope of work, including personnel[2], equipment and materials, travel and other direct costs.

Evaluation Criteria

All proposals will be initially evaluated by the GLC and members of the project team to determine level of knowledge, experience and general qualifications. Evaluation criteria include, but are not limited to:

- Clear articulation of the analytical methods proposed, data needs, potential data sources, and form of results/deliverables
- Demonstration of applicant's readiness to complete all work called for herein within the designated timeframe.
- Applicant knowledge and experience with socio-economic and/or behavioral analysis
- Applicant knowledge of the GSI Impact Hub Calculator tool, its methodology, and outputs
- Explanation of how results will inform the broader project goal of providing recommendations to the Collaborative to increase utilization of nature-based solutions
- Innovative approaches to the economic evaluation and ability to adapt to data and budget limitations
- Experience conducting economic evaluations and/or benefit impact analyses.

[2] Individual consultant fees, as set forth in 2 CFR 1500.9, shall be limited to the maximum daily rate for a Level IV of the Executive Schedule, available at: https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/pay-leave/salaries-wages/. This limit applies to consultation services of designated individuals with specialized skills who are paid at a daily or hourly rate. This rate does not include transportation and subsistence costs for travel performed.

The GLC, as an equal opportunity employer and recipient of federal funding, complies with applicable federal and state laws prohibiting discrimination. It is the policy of the Great Lakes Commission that no person employed by or doing business with the GLC shall be discriminated against, as an employee or applicant for employment, because of race, color, national origin, religion, age, sex, height, weight, sexual orientation, marital status, partisan considerations or a disability or genetic information that is unrelated to the person's ability to perform the duties of a particular job or position.

Contract and Administrative Requirements

The selected applicant will be notified and asked to submit to the GLC a draft scope of work and budget for incorporation into a contract. GLC reserves the right to amend the draft scope of work relative to costs or other pertinent circumstances. Should an applicant or GLC be unable to come to agreeable terms, GLC reserves the right to disqualify the applicant and make a new selection or reissue this RFP.

In addition to the requirements outlined under Applicant Eligibility, the selected applicant is also expected to meet the following requirements:

Federal Requirements
The successful applicant must be registered in the federal System for Award Management (SAM) and have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) number prior to entering into a contract with the GLC. Information regarding obtaining a UEI number and registering in SAM can be provided upon request.

Financial Systems
Applicants must assure that they have adequate financial systems in place for the submittal of accurate invoices and supporting documentation on a mutually agreeable schedule (to be determined during the contracting phase).

Open Records
The selected applicant will provide open access to all data, records, financial information, and other materials generated by or associated with the funded project (within the limits of state and federal regulations). It is essential that successful applicants maintain detailed records of all expenses and activities as well as copies of submitted reports for future audits. Project data and results must also be disseminated in a manner that ensures accessibility to others.