

Balanced Growth Watershed Projects Request for Proposals Final Release – 09-02-09

Purpose and Background

The Ohio Lake Erie Commission and the Ohio Water Resources Council are pleased to announce a request for proposals for the development of Watershed Balanced Growth Plans. These plans will be developed similarly to plans created during the pilot phase of the Balanced Growth Program, which was developed by the Lake Erie Commission for the Lake Erie watershed. Due to the success of these pilot projects, this program is now being expanded statewide. Two proposals will be funded for tributary watersheds of Lake Erie, and up to six others proposals will be funded throughout Ohio.

The 2000 *Lake Erie Protection & Restoration Plan* (2000) outlined serious land use problems that diminish the health of the lake and limit its benefits to the people of Ohio. In 2004, a Balanced Growth Blue Ribbon Task Force comprised of various experts and stakeholders advised the Ohio Lake Erie Commission on how to “develop strategies that will balance the protection of Lake Erie with continued economic growth.” The Task Force recommendations were accepted by the Ohio Lake Erie Commission in April 2004. Their recommendations provided the foundation for the Balanced Growth Program, a voluntary, incentive-driven means for the state to encourage and support orderly growth and land use change at the local level.

The Balanced Growth Program is a locally driven planning framework for coordinated, regional decision-making about how growth and conservation should be promoted by local and state policies and investments in the context of watersheds. Included in this framework is the creation of Watershed Balanced Growth Plans. These plans would identify Priority Conservation Areas (PCAs) to protect critically important ecological, recreational, agricultural, heritage, public access, and other critical areas, and Priority Development Areas (PDAs) where growth and/or redevelopment should be supported. The concept is that the location of development is key to its impact on watersheds through the effective management of water resources including storm water runoff, ground water recharge, stream corridors and the like. Existing watershed planning (Ohio EPA/ODNR Watershed Action Plans) has not fully addressed this issue.

Therefore, Watershed Balanced Growth Plans complement and supplement these plans by adding the important dimension of local land use planning.

The Balanced Growth Watershed Plans should also address infrastructure planning for water, wastewater, transportation and other aspects of sustainable infrastructure such as pervious surfaces and wetland management for stormwater control. Planned extensions of sewer lines and/or transportation, water, and waste water projects should be included as available. The infrastructure planning component of the Balanced Growth Watershed Plan may include

planning for existing capacity as well as any anticipated future growth. Plans for future sustainable infrastructure approaches should also include Where applicable, there should be clear planning ties to Section 208 Water Quality Plans and Source water Protection Plans.

Watershed Planning Partnerships (WPPs) comprised of representatives of local governments, planning agencies, councils of governments, special purpose authorities, or non-governmental organizations (see Eligibility section below for more detail); will use the funds exclusively for the development of a Watershed Balanced Growth Plan.

Project Components

WPPs will propose how they specifically plan to expend the funds to prepare their plan. It is anticipated that a staff coordinator would be identified to complete the project. A project manager/point of contact should also be specified, if the coordinator will not fill that role. The bulk of the work completed by the coordinator will be to utilize a decision support system, assemble data in a useable form, conduct meetings with all affected entities and facilitate a consensus.

GIS data and preliminary modeling criteria and a GIS-based decision support system for watershed balanced growth planning will be provided by the State to the pilot watersheds. The decision support system will be an informational tool that the WPP may use in evaluating PCAs and PDAs, although the final location, data, criteria and decision model for these areas will need to be decided by members of the WPP. It is also understood that there are existing local GIS systems that can be utilized and incorporated into the project. The intention is to use existing state and local information to the greatest extent possible so that the WPP will be free to focus on the tasks of local facilitation and planning. The WPP may use a portion of the project funding for purchasing GIS software if necessary.

Major time expenditures for the development of the Watershed Balanced Growth Plan will be to convene the WPP and to meet with individual units of government. Maps that show potential alternative development and conservation scenarios will need to be prepared and distributed. These maps will require a thorough review with many entities such as each local government, state agencies, and regional organizations (transportation, utilities, storm water, etc.). Once the input and discussion has occurred, the information will need to be reported back to the WPP. It is anticipated that this will be an iterative process between each governmental unit and the entire Watershed Planning Partnership until consensus can be achieved.

The draft plan will then be released for public comment. A final plan will be agreed upon by the WPP and submitted to local governments for acceptance. When a significant majority (75%) of the counties, townships and municipalities

that have land use authority (planning, zoning, subdivision regulations) in the watershed based on number, land area, and population have accepted the plan, it will be submitted to the Ohio Lake Erie Commission or Ohio Water Resources Council for acceptance and endorsement. The endorsement process will be a review to consider whether the plan:

- Addresses the goals for Balanced Growth (as provided in the Balanced Growth Strategy)
- Identifies PCAs, and PDAs- (Priority Agricultural Areas are an option-see Balanced Growth Strategy for discussion of this option),
- Process was open and inclusive,
- Process had adequate local representation,
- Process included coordination with state agencies,
- Achieved local consensus.

Upon endorsement, State of Ohio agencies will be notified that the Watershed Balanced Growth Plan represents a locally determined plan, and they will be expected to honor its recommendations in making funding and other decisions.

The purpose of these projects is to implement the planning framework recommendations of the Balanced Growth Program. Therefore, it is imperative that anyone applying for this project becomes very familiar with the Balanced Growth Framework and Strategy documents, located online at the following website address. It is also recommended that applicants review the existing Balanced Growth Plans that have previously been developed in the pilot phase of the program. For more information on the Balanced Growth Program and the previous Plans, please visit <http://balancedgrowth.ohio.gov> or call (419) 245-2514. Please contact the Ohio Lake Erie Commission staff with any questions prior to submission of a response to this RFP (see contact explanation at the end of the RFP).

Special Incentives

In addition to offering communities the opportunity to inform state project planning, the state is offering special incentives to participating communities who have identified PCAs and PDAs as part of a state-endorsed Balanced Growth Watershed Plan. These incentives include higher scores for selected grants, lower interest rates for loans and other special considerations in state programs. The specific incentives to be offered for implementation of Watershed Balanced Growth Watershed Plans are included in the Balanced Growth Strategy document available at <http://www.balancedgrowth.ohio.gov/BalancedGrowthStrategy.aspx>.

Funding Availability

Funding is available to support two Balanced Growth planning projects in the Lake Erie watershed and up to six additional projects statewide. Each project will receive a maximum of \$100,000 distributed over a two-year period. No match is required, but

leveraging of additional funds and resources will be favorably considered during the selection process.

Deliverables:

- A Watershed Balanced Growth Plan that identifies Priority Conservation Areas and Priority Development Areas. Draft PCA and PDA maps should be provided no later than one year from the start of the project.
- A Watershed Balanced Growth Plan, including the process by which the Priority Conservation Areas and Priority Development Areas were chosen, the criteria used, and their link to water and habitat quality. The Plan should also include details about the organization and structure of the WPP, and a process for maintaining and implementing the plan once it has been endorsed. For the purposes of the grant, it is not required that the plan achieve endorsement status by the end of the grant period. A draft of this plan should be provided at the 18 month mark, containing at a minimum the information about PCA and PDA map development.
- Yearly interim reports on WPP activities and progress.

Information to be Supplied to WPPs

- GIS-based decision support system to help determine the suitability of PCA and PDA locations.
- State data to be used in this decision support system. Local data will be the responsibility of the Watershed Planning Partnership.
- Public Outreach materials to help explain the principles of balanced growth.

Eligibility

- Grants will be made to local watershed partnerships in Ohio.
- There is no set organizational structure for these partnerships. It is anticipated that such partnerships may be either non-profit organizations and/or government based.
- The size of the watershed to be covered by the partnership is flexible. However, it should include multiple governmental units and be formed around actual watershed boundaries and not political boundaries. Based on our experience with previous projects, we recommend sizing the watershed to include no more than approximately 20 local jurisdictions and no fewer than 5. Proposals for watersheds with more than 20 or fewer than 5 jurisdictions should provide additional justification (for example, unusually motivated communities, history of watershed working together, or additional funding/resources available).
- Partnerships must be legally organized and able to accept grant funds with appropriate financial accountability.
- Partnerships must have the up-front support of a significant majority (75%) of the counties, townships and municipalities that have land use authority (planning, zoning, subdivision regulations) in the watershed based on number of communities, land area, and population. This support is for the Partnership's effort to develop the plan and clearly does not reflect acceptance of the plan's recommendations since they have yet to be developed. The local government will

be asked to recognize the plan recommendations by passing a resolution after it has been completed.

- Preference will be given to watershed partnerships that have demonstrated the ability to complete watershed planning activities (e.g. Ohio EPA/ODNR Watershed Action Plans) or other significant accomplishments.

Selection Criteria

- Support and diversity of key stakeholders.
- Demonstrated ability of applying organization to administer funding and produce deliverables.
- Demonstrated local awareness of importance of watershed and relationship of land use location to water resources.
- Additional funds or in-kind resources being leveraged to develop the Watershed Balanced Growth Plan.

Selection Process

Submitted proposals will be evaluated by a committee comprised of representatives of State of Ohio agencies and final selection will be made by the Ohio Lake Erie Commission and Ohio Water Resources Council.

Timeline

RFP Released	August 19, 2009
General RFP Information Session*	September 1, 2009
Initial Proposals Due	October 16, 2009
Resolutions of Support Due	November 30, 2009
Selection of Projects	December 16, 2009
Projects Start	January 1, 2010
Projects End	December 31, 2011

* There will be an RFP Information Session for all potential applicants to learn more about Balanced Growth Watershed Plans and to ask questions about this RFP.

Proposal Guidelines

In order to be considered, 10 hardcopies (including one original, so marked) of the proposal, plus an electronic copy (on CD in Microsoft Word or .pdf format), are required from the applicant. Proposals, except for local government resolutions of support (see 8 below), are due to the Ohio Lake Erie Commission Office no later than October 16, 2009. Resolutions indicating support may be submitted until November 30, 2009. Faxed proposals will not be accepted.

The proposal must include the following elements:

1. Cover letter signed by a person authorized to legally bind the applicant. The letter should contain a brief statement of the applicant's understanding of the work to be done and a commitment to perform the work within the time period proposed.
2. Title page including:

- a. Title of Project
 - b. Applicant Organization
 - c. Amount requested
 - d. Project Director
 - e. Email
 - f. Address
 - g. Phone
 - h. Payment Address
 - i. Federal Tax ID (Required)
3. Project Background
- a. Map of Watershed
 - b. Watershed Description:
 - I. Name and size (i.e. acres or square miles)
 - II. Hydrologic Unit Code
 - III. Major geographic elements
 - IV. Primary land uses
 - V. Major threats to the watershed's natural resources and if known, their sources
 - c. Partnership Overview: Briefly describe why and when the partnership was formed, its current status and any successes to date. Include a list of members involved in the partnership.
4. Project Goals- list, in bullet form, the goals of the proposed project
5. Project Strategies
- a. List the specific tasks to be carried out and by whom
 - b. Describe the products that will result from the project
 - c. Include a project timeline (e.g. Gant chart) that identifies the projected dates for major milestones
 - d. Describe the qualifications of the project personnel to carry out the tasks
 - e. Describe the GIS capabilities available to project personnel.
6. Budget- Include a detailed project budget. Indicate other sources of secure or potential funding or support (in-kind assistance), if any, that will be applied to the project. A sample budget form is available online.
7. Resume of project coordinator: Include a resume of the primary individual responsible for carrying out the proposed goals of the project. If primary individual has not yet been determined, please indicate as such and include position job description to be used for hiring.
8. Resolutions of support: Include resolutions indicating willingness to participate from counties, townships, and municipalities within the geographic areas of the watershed. They may be members of the watershed planning partnership or they

may simply support or accept the role of the partnership in the preparation of the Watershed Balanced Growth Plan.

For more information, please contact:*

Ohio Lake Erie Commission

419-245-2514

lakeeriecommission@ameritech.net

<http://balancedgrowth.ohio.gov>

Mail proposals and resolutions of support to:

Ohio Lake Erie Commission

One Maritime Plaza, 4th Floor

Toledo, OH 43604

* The projects in the Ohio River Watershed will be coordinated by the Staff of the Ohio Water Resources Council. However, to simplify the application process, assure consistent responses to questions, questions will be directed to the Ohio Lake Erie Commission and application will be initially submitted to the Lake Erie Commission office. Selection of applications will be conducted by the administering agency: Ohio Lake Erie Commission for Lake Erie watersheds and Ohio Water Resources Council for Ohio River watersheds.