

# Forever Our Rivers Foundation

## River Health Partnerships - Grant Making Guidelines

### Vision

Forever Our Rivers Foundation envisions a vibrant national movement led by the commitment of businesses, consumers and boots-on-the-ground nonprofits to ensure healthy rivers today and into the future.



### Mission

To lead a unique business- and consumer-driven model to fund and support river health.

### Values

Driving our work are:

- ∞ Meaningful Impact - Funding those River Health Partners and projects that bring the greatest benefit to sustainable river health.
- ∞ Notable Return on Investment (ROI) - Delivering strong consumer engagement and brand loyalty to benefit Corporate Partners.
- ∞ Efficiency - Minimizing the gap between consumer interests, corporate social impact and river health.

### Funding Philosophy

Forever Our Rivers' grantmaking process invests revenues earned via Cause Marketing activities to support River Health Partners working in alignment with these beliefs:

- ∞ Communities are the best stewards of their local river systems.
- ∞ To provide the highest benefit to humans and wildlife, rivers must be healthy, protected and resilient to myriad risks and pressures.
- ∞ Systems that provide for ongoing monitoring, maintenance, and learning are imperative to the perpetuation of river health.

As river health experts, Forever Our Rivers is far more than a grant funder. The Foundation partners with those organizations that demonstrate proven ability to maximize river health through leveraged resources, robust evaluation, and solid accountability.

Forever Our Rivers' goal is to be **an effective granting partner**, adding value and maintaining positive relationships with its River Health Partners and collaborating funders. As a result, Forever Our Rivers strives to:

- ∞ Be consistent and clear in its expectations and reporting systems, communicating early and transparently when changes are needed.
- ∞ Establish granting partnerships of depth, meaning that fewer but larger grants will be awarded to carefully-selected partners.
- ∞ Foster a culture of learning among grantees.
- ∞ Establish strong systems for evaluating impacts on the ground, based on best practices and input from River Health Partners, Corporate Partners and collaborating funders.
- ∞ Serve as a collaboration catalyst and hub for River Health Partners to share resources, establish new partnerships and leverage funding.

Forever Our Rivers' grant making priority is to fill the gaps important to enhancing and maintaining healthy rivers. Attached is a table that identifies the priorities and investments of significant river health funders as demonstration that Forever Our Rivers is looking to support projects in a non-duplicative manner.

## Grantee Eligibility

Grantees must be a recognized 501(c)(3) organization or other tax-exempt charitable entity (such as a local government or educational institution).

Forever Our Rivers will not provide funding for:

- ∞ Politically divisive or lobbying activities;
- ∞ Endowment investments; or
- ∞ International projects.

## Application Requirements

Applicant requests must align with both Forever Our Rivers' Values and Funding Philosophy, as outlined above and in the [Strategic Plan](#). Additional factors used to consider of potential grantees include:

- ∞ Ecological, recreational and/or social value of project goals;
- ∞ History of organization's work on similar projects;
- ∞ Reputation and financial health of grantee;
- ∞ Experience and capacity of key staff;
- ∞ Clarity and viability of project budget;
- ∞ Level of local support and capability of project partners;
- ∞ Availability of in-kind and monetary match; and
- ∞ Project connection to a larger local or regional plan.

Financial guidelines for applicants:

- ∞ Eligible project costs may include: labor, supplies, equipment rental, project specific travel and food, incidental office expenses, sub-contractor, modest administration costs, and other expenses deemed necessary for project success. Funding for organizational capacity building may be approved on a case-by-case basis.
- ∞ Demonstrated matching funds will be required to ensure sufficient revenues and other resources for successful project implementation and completion. While each proposal will be evaluated individually, a minimum 50 percent cash match is suggested; in-kind match also will be favorably considered. Forever Our Rivers may conditionally issue a grant award, that will not be finalized until matching funds are secured.

## Application Process

Forever Our Rivers funding is available only to its registered River Health Partners. All River Health Partners are invited to submit a letter of interest, with full applications accepted only upon invitation from Forever Our Rivers.

Letters of interest are accepted on a rolling basis, should be one-page in length and include:

- ∞ Brief description of the project, intended outcomes, and dates/time parameters.
- ∞ Brief description of the lead organization, and any additionally-participating organizations and collaborators.
- ∞ Total project budget, amount requested of Forever Our Rivers, and discussion of secured matching funds/resources.

Once invited to provide a full proposal, applicants will be provided with a form for submittal of the following information:

- ∞ **Organizational background**, including: Founding and history of the organization, and brief mention of the programs and constituency served.
- ∞ **Project description**, including: Project goal, location, strategy and/or project approach, anticipated outputs and outcomes/impact, systems to ensure long-term viability of the project, timeframe for completion, and project partners.
- ∞ 2-3 sentence **Bios of key staff** and their roles in project.
  
- ∞ **Clear evaluation metrics** to assess project success.
- ∞ **Budget narrative**, including explanation of project impact on the organizational budget and description of anticipated matching funds.
- ∞ **Supporting information**, as applicable, including:
  - Project budget (form provided by Forever Our Rivers);
  - Current year organizational budget and year-to-date financial report (Statement of Activities, Statement of Position);
  - Strategic plan;
  - Statement regarding Board of Directors' financial contributions to the organization;
  - IRS Tax-Exempt Determination Letter;
  - Latest available financial audit and IRS Form 990; and
  - List of Board of Directors with affiliations.

## Grant Progress Reporting Requirements

Grant recipients will be required to provide the following:

- ∞ Brief written interim reports on project progress, based on evaluative metrics provided in the original proposal; and a financial accounting of Forever Our Rivers and matching funds spent to date. Limited to one page and the financial attachment.
- ∞ A final written report that documents the project's outputs and overall outcomes/impact, based on evaluative metrics provided in the original proposal; documentation of challenges and lessons learned; and a final accounting of all expended Forever Our Rivers and matching funds. Limited to two pages and the financial attachment.
  - 3-5 photos illustrating the success of the project, and 2-3 testimonials (100 words or less) demonstrating the impact of grant outcomes should be attached to the final report.

## Approval and Award Process

- ∞ Applications will be evaluated and awarded by the Forever Our Rivers Board of Directors and/or an appointed Grants Review Committee. A site visit may be required prior to grant award.
- ∞ A schedule for receipt of grant payments and submittal dates of interim and final reports will be included as part of a grant award.
- ∞ Depending on project specifics, Forever Our Rivers reserves the right to conduct on-site inspection of project activities.

Forever Our Rivers will conduct an annual assessment of its grantmaking to evaluate the overall impact the program has on the grantee's goals and overall impacts in advancing river health. Additionally, Forever Our Rivers will share and promote grantee progress and success stories, with the intention to advance the goals of Forever Our Rivers and the grantee.

## Attachment Forever Our Rivers Foundation Funding Priorities

This table identifies Forever Our Rivers Foundation and other river health funder priorities and support levels. Forever Our Rivers' goal is to fill important gaps and contribute to collaborative funding efforts.

minor support	moderate support	significant support

River Health Issue	Funding Source		Outcome
	Forever Our Rivers	Other Organizations	
Advocacy			Changes to policy and/or legislation are enacted
Riparian restoration			Streamside wildlife habitats are improved
Long-term maintenance & monitoring			Large investments in restoration efforts are protected into the future
Research connected to monitoring			Changes to the ecosystem over time are better understood and used to inform future actions
Connecting communities to their rivers; e.g., river trails, boat launch, education			Awareness & respect that rivers provide are increased; e.g., drinking water, food security, recreation
Organizational capacity			Enabling nonprofits to provide the staff expertise and other infrastructure to manage projects
In-stream enhancements			River & wetland aquatic habitats improved

Land conservation that supports river health			Critical agricultural lands and watersheds protected from development
Functional flows			Base flows established to sustain aquatic and riparian river dynamics
Water quality			Drinking water & aquatic habitat protected
Multi-year commitment for funding			Important actions are continued to an appropriate end point