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Atlantic Ecosystems Initiatives

Application Guidelines 2016-2019

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Application Guidelines

This document provides applicants with the information required to develop a funding proposal for the Atlantic Ecosystems Initiatives. The guidelines include general program information including eligibility requirements and how to complete the application form and submit the full application package.

Enquiries related to the Atlantic Ecosystems Initiatives should be directed to aei-iea@ec.gc.ca or by phone: 902-426-8521 or 1-800-663-5755 (toll-free).

Program Information:

The Atlantic Ecosystems Initiatives Funding Program (AEI) aims to improve the health, productivity and long-term sustainability of ecosystems in Atlantic Canada. The program supports projects that use an ecosystem-based approach that includes broad partnerships and collaborative action that leads to positive environmental results. Funding will be provided for projects that enhance integrated ecosystem planning and decision-making, increase ecosystem knowledge and science, and undertake actions that reach across Atlantic Canada to conserve, restore and enhance the health of ecosystems.

An ecosystem-based approach takes into consideration the entire ecosystem and the interconnectivity of its elements; individual species, communities, functions and elements of the ecosystem are managed holistically rather than in isolation. The goal is to preserve, protect, enhance and conserve the long term ecological health of Atlantic Canada's natural ecosystems. An ecosystem-based approach integrates complimentary approaches to better address complex ecological issues within the ecosystem(s). An ecosystem includes all living organisms including humans as well as the physical environment functioning together as a unit.

Adhering to an ecosystem-based approach, the AEI will support collaborative projects that address multiple elements of the ecosystem and build partnerships that allow work across multiple ecosystems which contribute to the overall health and functioning of ecosystems throughout the region. Within Atlantic Canada there are a variety of ecosystems of varying scope and scale such as bioregions, watersheds and watershed sub-basins that overlap and nest within each other. Ecosystems are not restricted to jurisdictional boundaries. Projects applying to the AEI should consider natural boundaries based on ecological functions derived from scientific, traditional, policy and management assessments.

Ecosystem-based issues of concern are often very complex and cross a variety of geographic and biological boundaries, as well as organizational mandates. Therefore, ecosystem-based projects require the engagement of a variety of stakeholders to effectively address the complexities. The AEI encourages strong partnerships among

non-government organizations, Aboriginal governments and organizations, industry and academia in Atlantic Canada, and supports collaborative working relationships with other federal, provincial, and municipal levels of government.

Program Priorities

Funding is available through the Atlantic Ecosystems Initiatives for projects that address **one or more** of the following three program priorities. Proposals that address the interconnectivity of more than one priority area will receive a higher rating:

- 1. Water Quality:** Improve the assessment, monitoring, modeling, and mitigation of multiple stressors and their cumulative effects on water quality in Atlantic Canada from headwaters to estuaries.

Within this priority, projects are required to focus on a minimum of two of these specific stressors:

- Nutrients
- Sediments
- Bacteria
- Pesticides
- Micro-plastics.

- 2. Habitat and Biodiversity:** Increase understanding and prevention of biodiversity through research, conservation and stewardship activities such as protecting, conserving, or rehabilitating significant habitat and species of interest.

Within this priority, projects are required to focus on two or more of these areas:

- Prevention of biodiversity loss
- Significant habitats such as Acadian and/or Boreal forests, Grasslands/Agro-ecosystems, Estuaries, eel grass beds
- A species of interest.

- 3. Impacts of Climate Change:** Increase the understanding of the adverse impacts of climate change on water quality, and/or habitat and biodiversity in order to build resilience and improved climate change risk preparedness in Atlantic Canada.

Within this priority, projects must focus on one or more of these areas:

- Risk preparedness
- Climate change risk mapping and prediction:
 - Flooding
 - Storm surge
 - Sea-level rise
 - Changing coastline
 - Habitat degradation.

Eligible Activities

Projects must include at least one of these eligible activities:

1. Planning and Decision-Making: Projects will address complex ecosystem issues in Atlantic Canada through integrated planning and collaborative decision-making that will lead to action and measureable environmental results. Eligible activities may include:

- Expansion of existing and/or the development of new integrated strategies, plans, frameworks and action plans
- Adaptation planning
- Integration of data/information
- Coordination or adoption of common scientific protocols.

2. Knowledge and Science: Projects will increase knowledge to better understand and address issues of concern impacting ecosystem health and sustainability and the interconnectivity of ecosystems in Atlantic Canada. Projects will involve the collection, interpretation, analysis and sharing of information to support informed decisions and action. Eligible activities may include:

- Geographic Information System (GIS) mapping
- Vulnerability, risk, or threat assessments
- Measurement, analysis or modelling of ecosystem changes or trends
- Measurement or assessment of multiple stressors and their cumulative effects
- Assessment of baseline environmental conditions
- Development of scientific tools, techniques, indicators and approaches
- Monitoring and/or modeling of cumulative effects.

3. Action: Projects will involve ecosystem conservation, restoration and enhancement as part of an overall strategic plan. Projects must demonstrate an ecosystem-based approach and achieve measurable environmental results in the priority areas of water quality, habitat and biodiversity, and impacts of climate change. Eligible activities include:

- Habitat restoration
- Coastal erosion mitigation
- Best management practices to improve water quality, habitat and biodiversity and/or impacts of climate change (i.e. livestock fencing, riparian enhancement, erosion control)
- Reducing ecosystem stressors or impacts
- Climate change risk preparedness.

Ineligible Projects:

The following types of projects will not be considered for funding under the Atlantic Ecosystems Initiatives:

- Monitoring and data collection as stand-alone projects. These projects must be part of an overall trend analysis, or integrated planning process.
- Projects that have a single issue 'action' focus such as stream clean-ups, attending conferences, training, workshops and meetings.
- Education and outreach as stand-alone projects, but these activities can be incorporated into projects that meet the eligibility criteria outlined above.
- Projects which extend beyond the coastal zone in Atlantic Canada. Ocean-based and fish-based ecosystem projects are not eligible.

Eligible Recipients

Only Atlantic Canadian organizations are eligible and include:

- Non-government organizations;
- Coalitions and Networks of organizations;
- Research and academic institutions;
- Aboriginal governments and organizations.

Although business/industry, federal, provincial, and municipal governments are not eligible funding recipients, they are encouraged to partner with applicants on projects.

Geographic Location

Projects must be focused on ecosystems within Atlantic Canada, which includes the provinces of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, and Newfoundland and Labrador.

Project activities cannot be limited to one single province and priority will be given to projects that will take place in all four provinces across multiple ecosystems. Projects must be focused in the coastal zone or land-based areas that influence the coastal zone of Atlantic Canada.

Eligible project costs

The following project costs are eligible under the Program:

- human resource costs, including salaries and benefits;
- contract and professional services (e.g., accounting, liability insurance costs that are directly attributed to carrying out the project, monitoring, legal or other professional fees);
- travel and field costs;
- material and supplies;
- printing and production;

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- communication and distribution;
- equipment purchase or rental;
- vehicle rental and operation;
- translation; and
- a reasonable share of overhead and/or administrative costs that are directly attributed to project (no more than 15%)

Amount of Funding Available

The current request for proposals is for projects that will begin on or after April 1, 2016. Projects must be completed no later than March 31, 2019.

Projects are eligible for funding up to a maximum of \$250,000 per project and must be completed within 3 years.

At least 30% of the total project funding must come from sources other than the Government of Canada.* Other sources of funding may be in the form of cash or in-kind contributions, or a combination of both.

In-kind support may include donations of:

- equipment, materials and/or office space;
- volunteer time for project activities, coordination or professional services;
- expertise from consultants, elders or academics;
- any other donated goods or services that contribute to covering the costs of the project.

Note that Environment Canada funding for the project must be spent within Atlantic Canada.

*Employment support programs within Service Canada and programs for people within Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada are exempt from this requirement.

Overlap with Other Environment Canada Funding Programs

Any proposal submitted to other Environment Canada funding programs must be for activities that are different from those submitted in this proposal. Applications that have overlapping activities with another proposal submitted to other Environment Canada programs may be found ineligible and not considered for funding. It is the responsibility of the applicant to clearly explain how the activities from this proposal differ from other proposals submitted to other Environment Canada programs for funding.

Organizations should review information from other Environment Canada funding programs and submit proposals to the one that represents the best fit for their project. For more information on Environment Canada's funding programs, see the following website:

<http://www.ec.gc.ca/financement-funding/default.asp?lang=En&n=923047A0-1>

Evaluation Criteria

All proposals will be assessed against the following criteria. Projects will be given a rating for each criterion as well as an overall rating for the project. Projects with the highest overall ratings will be recommended for funding. Project evaluation will be based on Required and Desirable Criteria.

Required Criteria

- 1. Demonstrates strong linkages to the AEI program priorities** -The proposal must provide comprehensive information that clearly demonstrates strong linkages with at least one of the AEI program priorities of water quality, habitat and biodiversity, and impacts of climate change. Proposals should convey how the project will contribute to desired outcomes for the program priority. Applicants are strongly encouraged to identify how the project activities address the other priorities.
- 2. Demonstrates an ecosystem-based approach** - A strong project is one that takes an ecosystem-based approach and includes activities addressing common priorities or issues in multiple ecosystems throughout Atlantic Canada. With an ecosystem-based approach, projects must address more than one element of the ecosystem as well as the interconnectivity of elements within the ecosystem. Organizations are required to develop projects that address issues that go beyond a specific watershed or single ecosystem and cover a broader geographic area within Atlantic Canada.
- 3. Build partnerships through collaboration with other organizations** – Strong partnerships across multiple ecosystems and provinces are required. Collaboration among non-government organizations as well as research and academic institutions will build regional capacity to enhance the health, productivity and long-term sustainability of the ecosystems. Partnerships with federal, provincial, municipal and Aboriginal governments as well as business/industry may contribute expertise and resources which could enhance the outcomes of a project. Although eligible organizations must reside within Atlantic Canada, partnerships beyond those boundaries (both within Canada and the United States), could enhance the quality of a proposal.

4. **Achieve or lead to measurable environmental results** - The proposal should clearly articulate the immediate outcomes and the long-term benefits of carrying out the project activities. Proponents should demonstrate how integrated planning and knowledge generation activities will lead to action and describe the positive environmental impacts in Atlantic Canada. Applicants should describe their plans and commitment to pursue activities which may be required following the completion of the project to maximize the outcomes and impacts of the project.
5. **Be scientifically and/or technically sound** - The proposal must provide comprehensive information to allow independent subject matter experts to judge the scientific/technical merit of the proposed project. It must demonstrate a strong potential for technical success and be based on sound scientific principles, which should be described in a detailed methodology. The proposal must demonstrate the competence of the members of the project team in terms of their track record in the subject matter.
6. **Demonstrate management capability to successfully undertake the project** - The proposal must document the experience of the team in project management and present an appropriate project management plan that will demonstrate the ability to undertake the project and achieve the expected results. The organization must show that it has the capacity and track record to carry out the project.

Desirable Criteria

1. **Build on existing research and knowledge** - Project activities are expected to build on existing research and knowledge wherever possible. Environment Canada recognizes the value of both traditional and scientific knowledge. A strong proposal should build on a vast knowledge base from public and private sources in order to undertake activities that achieve greater environmental results. Organizations are encouraged to link their activities to existing ecosystem-based strategies and describe how the project will build on existing work and/or undertake actions that will advance the priorities identified in plans or strategies.
2. **Leverage funding from other sources** - The ability to lever funds from other public and private sources will strengthen the relative merit of a proposal. Projects that demonstrate strong financial leveraging of funds from sources other than Environment Canada will contribute to greater results per investment. Proposals that lever funding above the minimum 30% required by the program will be considered stronger under a competitive process. Proposals that can demonstrate that funds required to carry out the project have been secured will be considered stronger under a competitive process.

3. **Multi-sector engagement** – Projects that involve a collaborative approach that includes partners from multiple sectors including business, research institutions, government and non-profit organizations allows for a more comprehensive ecosystem-based approach to be realized. Each sector can contribute experience, resources, and expertise that work together to create synergies and broaden the scope and impacts of projects. Proposals which include meaningful participation from government and industry to address complex issues taking into consideration multiple factors (environmental, economic, and social) are encouraged.
4. **Dissemination of results and knowledge** - Organizations are encouraged to seek opportunities for knowledge transfer to other organizations and/or other geographic areas that would extend the reach of project outcomes. Competitive proposals will demonstrate a commitment to disseminate results and findings to ensure that benefits accrue to a wide array of stakeholders and achieve broad impacts throughout Atlantic Canada.

Review and Evaluation Process

The Atlantic Ecosystems Initiatives project funding decisions will be based on a merit based competitive process. Completed applications will undergo a three-stage review process:

- 1) Administrative review by program staff to confirm eligibility (projects considered not eligible will be notified at the end of this stage);
- 2) Technical review by subject-matter experts to confirm scientific and technical feasibility;
- 3) Proposal review to ensure that program priorities and criteria are considered in the project evaluation and approval process.

How to Apply

Complete and submit the Application Package.

The application package must include the following:

- Completed application form (including cash flow forecast (excel workbook) and performance indicators tables)
- Letters of support confirming project financing
- Other supporting information if applicable such as site maps, reference documents, supporting data, etc.).

An **application checklist** can be found at the end of the application form. Use this to ensure that you have included all components of the application.

With the exception of confirmation of support forms from other funding sources, all information and supporting documentation must be included with the application package. **No additional information received after the application deadline will be taken into consideration.**

Please see *Annex 1: How to Complete the Application Form* for details on preparing the application.

Application Deadline

The deadline to submit an application is **November 20, 2015**.

All applications must be received in the Environment Canada office by midnight **November 20, 2015**. Email your completed forms to aei-iea@ec.gc.ca . If you are unable to email, contact us for information on alternative ways to submit your application.

Notification

Once departmental approvals have been confirmed, all applicants (both successful and unsuccessful) will be notified in writing. If your project is approved, you will be contacted to negotiate a Contribution Agreement, which outlines the terms and conditions of funding.

Annex 1: How to Complete the Application Form

1. Organization Information and Project Contacts

Provide the full legal name and address of the organization and include a brief description of the mandate, years of operation, governance structure, and management team. Provide charitable registration number if applicable. In addition, contact information for two individuals responsible for the project is required. Both contacts must be knowledgeable about the contents of the project proposal. One of the contacts should be the individual who would sign the agreement on behalf of the organization.

2. Project Summary

Indicate the title, location, and expected start and end dates of the project. As well, indicate the amount of funding requested from the Atlantic Ecosystems Initiatives by fiscal year, the total request and prior history of funding by Environment Canada. Project title and description will be used in all communications by Environment Canada related to the project, and the description may be made available to the public if the proposal is approved for funding.

3. Project Description

This section requires details about the project, including: program priorities, eligible activities, project purpose, project goals and objectives, key activities/work plan, project team experience, and project partners.

a) Program Priorities

Indicate which of the three program priorities, water quality, habitat and biodiversity loss or impacts of climate change, best fit with your proposal. Under each priority, the project must focus on one or more of the specific areas listed. Select which ones best fit with your proposal.

b) Eligible Activities

Select one or more of the eligible activities of Planning and Decision-making, Knowledge and Science, or Action. Under the activity selected, indicate which of the eligible project sub-activities best fit with your proposal.

c) Project Purpose

In a few sentences, explain the purpose of this project. Describe the priority/priorities being addressed, how they will be addressed through this project and why the project is important to the ecosystem(s). The use of action words such as increase, reduce, improve, enhance, prevent, etc. is encouraged.

d) Project Goals and Objectives

Identify project goals and objectives that will be achieved within the timeframe of the project and the expected results. Use SMART objectives (*Specific, Measurable,*

Achievable, Realistic and Time Bound). Clearly explain how the project will benefit the ecosystem(s).

e) Key Activities/Work Plan

Provide details for each activity to be undertaken in the proposed project. Describe techniques involved, the expected results, and identify the timeline for each activity. Include a description of what information will be provided to Environment Canada to demonstrate that the activity was accomplished as described. Provide a start and end date for each activity to be undertaken.

f) Project Team Experience

Provide details about the duties and responsibilities of the individuals(s) involved in project delivery. Who will work on the project (project coordinator, volunteers, consultants, technical experts, etc.)? Identify relevant qualifications and experiences of the project team members to demonstrate the organization's experience and capacity to carry out the project.

g) Project Partners

List each of the project partners, and explain their role and expertise in the project. (Do not include financial details here). A project 'Partner' is described as a person or organization that shares in both the risks and rewards of the project. A partner contributes to the project (knowledge, skills, and/or resources), stands to benefit in some way from the success of the project, and is assigned a specific role in accomplishing the project.

4. Evaluation

a) Evaluation Plan

Provide an evaluation plan that clearly demonstrates how you will assess whether the project goals and objectives have been met. The plan should include the methodology and any calculations/formulas used to measure your project's results.

b) Evaluation Criteria

Provide a description of how your proposal addresses each of the Evaluation Criteria. You are not required to repeat the information already included in your proposal, however this section is an opportunity to give additional details on the way your project meets the required criteria which are the key criteria upon which the proposal will be evaluated.

c) Performance indicators

Performance indicators define a set of values against which to measure the results achieved by the project in meeting its objectives. The first set of indicators is project indicators, and you must report a target value for each one listed. The second set of indicators is environmental indicators, and you must choose at least one (1) indicator

from the list that applies to the project. Once you have identified which performance indicators to track, assign an appropriate target for each in your application package. Please provide a description of how the target was calculated. You will be expected to report against the targets in the project progress reports.

5. Cash Flow Forecast

Please complete the Excel Workbook “AEI Cash Flow 2016-2019.xls” and submit it as part of your application package. The Cash Flow Forecast includes all project contributors, total project expenditures, and use of Environment Canada funding for each year of the project. Instructions on how to complete the tables are contained in the first tab of the workbook.

Contributors to the project can be defined by the following categories:

Partner: An individual or organization that plays an active role in the project, provides cash and/or in-kind resources, and is invested in the project results.

Funder/Contributor: An individual or organization that contributes towards part or all of the project’s costs, either cash or in-kind.

Stakeholder: An individual or organization that has an interest in the outcome of the project. Supports the project in principle, and may be interested in the results, but is not actively involved in carrying out the project.

6. Submitting the Application Package

The completed application package should include:

- A completed Application form
- A completed Cash Flow Forecast (Excel workbook ‘AEI Cash Flow 2016-2019.xls’)
- Letters of support for cash or in-kind contributions secured for the project must be included with the application package.
- Other supporting information (if applicable) such as site maps, reference documents, supporting data, etc.

An **application checklist** can be found at the end of the application form. Use this to ensure you have included all components of the application.

The application package should be emailed to aei-ia@ec.gc.ca on or before midnight on November 20, 2015.

Contact information

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Environment Canada:

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Environment Canada

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or 1-800-663-5755 (toll-free)

Fax: 902-426-2062

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Glossary of Terms

Ecosystem-based approach:

An ecosystem-based approach takes into consideration the entire ecosystem and the interconnectivity of its elements; individual species, communities, functions and elements of the ecosystem are managed holistically rather than in isolation. The goal is to preserve, protect, enhance and conserve the long term ecological health of Atlantic Canada's natural ecosystems. The ecosystem-based approach integrates complimentary approaches to better address complex ecological issues within the ecosystem(s). An ecosystem includes all living organisms including humans as well as the physical environment functioning together as a unit.

Cumulative Effects:

The effects on ecosystems resulting from multiple interactions among human activities and natural processes that accumulate over time. These direct and indirect activities combine to collectively impact ecosystems. For example, ecosystems can be damaged by the combined effects of human activities, such as air, land, and/or water pollution, and other human development activities.

Species of Interest:

In the context of wildlife conservation, Species of Concern is an informal term, not defined in the federal Endangered Species Act. The term commonly refers to species that are declining or appear to be in need of concentrated conservation actions in a particular ecosystem.

Coastal Zone:

The coastal zone is the interface where the land meets the ocean, encompassing shoreline environments as well as adjacent coastal waters. The zone can include beaches and dunes, estuaries, wetlands, and other coastal features, as well as the adjacent land draining directly into the coastal waters.