

Understanding Project Development

The Lenfest Ocean Program supports scientific research to inform real-world challenges in ocean conservation and management. As a grant-making institution, its goal is to fund high-impact research projects that fill critical information gaps faced by decision-makers. This document will be helpful for you to review before continuing below: <https://www.lenfestocean.org/-/media/assets/extranets/lenfest/lop4pagerturtle.pdf>

Key to this approach is the program’s unique model for designing projects with potential grantees. Instead of following a more traditional review process that places strict restrictions on the interaction between applicants and program officers, the LOP engages directly with individuals to develop research projects. The project development process has been designed to respond to a diverse set of research areas and decision contexts, and thus may look different for different projects.

In general, there are 3 steps a project takes from an initial idea to a full proposal:

<u>Steps</u>	<u>Description</u>
Idea Form	LOP program officers may request an initial Idea Form from potential grantees as a way to solicit preliminary information. The form is a short, 1-2 page description of the project idea, the knowledge gaps it aims to fill, and a brief synopsis of the decision-making context.
Concept Paper/Letter of Intent	<p>If the initial idea aligns with the mission and priorities of the LOP, program staff will invite the potential grantee to submit a concept paper - the primary project narrative and budget that will be used to develop the full details of the proposed work. Through an interactive and iterative process, program officers work directly with potential grantees to ensure that the concept note reflects their research ideas.</p> <p>During this process, LOP project development staff will assess how the concept note has progressed and will either request revisions or turn down the concept paper. If successful, a final version of the concept paper will be submitted as a Letter of Intent (LOI) through an online grants management platform and will undergo an internal review. A successful Letter of Intent then populates the narrative section of the full grant application.</p>
Full Grant Application	Once the LOI is approved, LOP program officers will request a full proposal. At this stage, no further (or very minor) revisions will be made to the project narrative and budget, and additional supporting financial documentation will be requested from the potential grantee’s institution.



What potential grantees should expect from LOP program officers

When developing a project, potential grantees can expect to receive timely and specific feedback on their concept papers to help guide the development of the proposal. Concept papers typically require one or two rounds of revisions on the technical, procedural, or budgetary aspects of their proposed work. However, if significant progress is not made by the third round of revisions, the project idea will not be considered for funding.

When a concept paper is finalized, it will be submitted as a Letter of Intent into an online web-based portal. The proposal will be reviewed internally by interdisciplinary experts that provide critiques and suggestions to determine whether to invite a full proposal.

Although this process is interactive, it is also competitive. Timelines for decisions on potential projects are determined by the LOP.

The LOP recognizes that submitted proposals are the intellectual property of potential grantees, and thus at any point potential grantees may withdraw their projects from consideration by the LOP. Given this, LOP staff will communicate the status of proposals in a timely manner so that those ideas can be presented elsewhere if they aren't a good fit with the LOP.

What LOP program officers expect from potential grantees:

Effective communication is critical during the iterative process that is involved in developing a proposal. Potential grantees are expected to describe specific research questions, methods which aim to address the questions, and why the proposed research will help fill an information gap needed for decision-making about marine resource conservation, restoration, and/or management.

The policy and/or decision-making landscape for proposed projects varies by topic, but the application of the research results to decisions must be clearly articulated to some level of specificity. Given this focus, successful proposals usually involve direct engagement or involvement between the potential grantees and relevant stakeholders that would use the research results to inform decision-making.

Even if potential grantees don't have previous experience identifying the application of their proposed research, the LOP can offer some support. LOP program officers are available to discuss applicants' research ideas and their potential fit in a relevant decision context, and/or to identify other resources that could help advance those ideas. Given this available support, please **do not** submit proposals that describe a research agenda followed by language, such as: "This research will inform policy and decision-makers". If you think you have a great scientific idea with minimal knowledge of its application for specific end users, contact the program officers directly or investigate the decision-context and relevance prior to submitting an idea to the LOP.

For greater context, potential grantees should review past and current LOP projects at lenfestocean.org.