



Environmental Fundors Network

Vision to Action: A Commitment to Maine's Quality of Place
A Funding Opportunity
Background, Goals, & Guidelines for *Letters of Inquiry*

Deadline: April 17, 2009

About Maine's Environmental Funders Network

The Environmental Funders Network [EFN] is a project of Maine Community Foundation and Maine Philanthropy Center whose purpose is finding ways for funders and philanthropists to become more responsive, creative, and effective grantmakers for Maine's environment. Following the publication of GrowSmart Maine's report by the Brookings Institution, "Charting Maine's Future: An Action Plan for Sustainable Prosperity and Quality Places, (HIGHLIGHT and LINK TO: <http://www.brookings.edu/reports/2006/10cities.aspx>) EFN steering committee members agreed that the report's key concept: "quality of place," conveys the essential relationship between Maine's environmental well-being and its economic prosperity and overall quality of life. To explore how philanthropy might best support the implementation of the report recommendations, EFN met with members of the Governor's Council on Maine's Quality of Place (HIGHLIGHT and LINK TO: <http://www.maine.gov/spo/specialprojects/qualityofplace/index.htm>) and with representatives from the business, nonprofit, and government sectors. EFN now proposes to apply its shared financial resources and knowledge to identify and support practical solutions to advance ideas from theory to action and results.

About EFN's *Quality of Place Initiative*

EFN recognizes that regional and statewide efforts are already underway or being planned, and that some, including the Governor's Quality of Place Council, are committed to advancing selected recommendations but may be undercapitalized or face other barriers to success.

Through financial support and learning opportunities, EFN's *Quality of Place Initiative* seeks to advance projects that strengthen the link between the natural and built environments, emphasize public engagement, and, in the case of collaborations, recognize the elements required to build and sustain them. The *Initiative* is designed to achieve the following outcomes:

- *Quality of Place* and the link between built and natural environments achieve broad-based, statewide support.
- Regional collaborations achieve greater impact and demonstrate the efficacy of partnerships in supporting and/or protecting built and natural places.
- Nonprofit organizations, governmental agencies, business, and philanthropy work together to implement *Quality of Place* strategies; knowledge, and resources are shared among and across the sectors.
- Best *Quality of Place* practices are identified and promoted.
- Barriers and funding gaps for effective *Quality of Place* projects are identified and addressed.

EFN will award a limited number of grants in varying amounts up to \$100,000, potentially renewable for two additional years. Successful grantees will have opportunities to learn from one another and to share their results and experiences with funders, media, and policy makers.

Letter of Inquiry Process & Format

As a first step in the grantmaking process, EFN invites *Letters of Inquiry* from nonprofit organizations, government agencies, or collaboratives (with a designated lead organization) working in Maine. The following guide provides prompts based upon the criteria. From the pool of *Letters*, an EFN advisory committee will select applicants to submit full proposals later this spring.

Letters of Inquiry should include the following:

- *Applicant Information:*
 - Organization or collaborative name (if a collaborative, include lead organization name)
 - EIN tax identification number
 - Year established
 - Staff contact
 - Email, phone number, and website URL (if available)
 - Organizational or collaborative mission
 - Service area
 - Key personnel in leadership roles
 - Project budget

- *Fit with Grantmaking Criteria*

Letters should reflect consideration of one or more of the following questions (choose up to four that most closely reflect Quality of Place recommendations and align with your goals):

1. What is the *Quality of Place* challenge your project intends to address?
2. Which *Quality of Place Initiative* outcomes most closely align with your goals [*see page one*]?
3. Does your project address one or more of the *Governor's Council on Quality of Place* recommendations (LINK TO "Quality of Place Recommendations" Document)?
4. If applying as a collaborative, please describe results to date.
5. How have will diverse stakeholders and the general public become engaged in the project?
6. Will your project seek to change public opinion or contribute to changes in public policy related to *Quality of Place*?
7. How is your organization or collaboration positioned to resolve this challenge?

Tips & Timeline

EFN is a volunteer-driven network with lean staffing and is unable to field phone calls regarding *Letters of Inquiry*. If you have questions to clarify the criteria, please send them via email to efn@mainephilanthropy.org by April 8.

- To be eligible for funding, applicants must be 501c3 nonprofit organization, governmental agency, or a regional collaboration's designated lead organization (501c3 organization or agency).
- Two pages maximum, plus budget (at least 11pt font size; margins of 1-inch).
- *Letters of Inquiry* must be submitted electronically, as a word document attachment (not .PDF), with **EFN/Quality of Place Initiative** as the subject line, to grants@mainecf.org no later than **April 17, 2009**.
- The advisory committee will conduct research on *Letters* and may contact your organization, partners, or others.
- Invitations to submit a full proposal will be sent in early June 2009.