

MacArthur Foundation

Request for Letters of Inquiry and Grant Guidelines

International Programs Conservation and Sustainable Development Greater Mekong Regional Strategy

Request for Letters of Inquiry for the Lancang / Upper Mekong Basin for 2013

Introduction

The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation's Conservation and Sustainable Development (CSD) program is launching a 10-year grant program in the Greater Mekong and its Headwaters.

The scope of this request for Letters of Inquiry (LOIs) is the Lancang / Upper Mekong Basin, the focus for our investment in 2013.

The foundation will make grants in the Lower Mekong countries in 2012 and will invest in basin-wide initiatives in 2014.

Our goal is to reduce current rates of biodiversity and natural habitat loss and sustain the ecosystem services that underpin human well-being in the Greater Mekong Basin.

The theory of change guiding our strategy in the Greater Mekong is that:

- Deepening the understanding of the benefits provided to the economies and people of the region by the biodiversity and natural habitats of the Lancang / Mekong River Basin and expanding incentives to conserve them will result in broader and more effective implementation of direct conservation action in the highest priority sites and landscapes.
- This will reduce pressures on high biodiversity landscapes, slow current trends of degradation and ecosystem service loss, and eventually reverse them.

We will test the theory of change by supporting initiatives that:

- Describe the importance of high biodiversity ecosystems to sustainable economic growth persuasively to key decision makers;
- Illustrate ways to generate positive incentives for environmental stewardship at the highest priority sites and landscapes;
- Contribute to testing and evaluating policies that distribute the costs and benefits of ecosystem management efficiently and more equitably among the users and providers of ecosystem services; and
- Monitor the status / trends in the health of ecosystems, pressures on them, and the effectiveness of conservation responses with scientific rigor and share this information with a broad audience.

Priorities

Our grant making priorities were guided by the results of a national consultation led by the Shan Shui Conservation Center (SSCC). SSCC led a highly collaborative process, with over 60 stakeholders consulted through workshops, small group meetings and email correspondence in 2013.

The objective was to develop grant-making priorities that had broad support within China and could be the basis for strategic support from donors, like MacArthur, with an interest in the conservation and sustainable development of the Lancang Basin.

We reviewed the priorities and selected a subset of them for targeted investment. Our choices were driven by the degree to which they would test our theory of change and where we felt our contribution could have a demonstrable impact in 5-10 years.

Letters of Inquiry must address one or more of the following thematic priorities.

1. Understand and respond to increased environmental pressures from development and climate change

- Analyze development policies, plans and programs, evaluate their impact on biodiversity and ecosystem services and propose alternative scenarios that minimize environmental impacts.
- Work with the private sector to develop guidelines for siting, developing, and operating mines and dams in an environmentally and socially responsible manner.

2. Create and expand incentives to conserve ecosystems

- Integrate biodiversity and ecosystem service values into land-use and development planning.
- Pilot and expand payment for ecosystem service (PES) approaches in grassland and wetland ecosystems.

3. Evaluate the impacts of conservation investment on biodiversity and human wellbeing through systematic monitoring

- Develop common standards and systems for monitoring the impacts and effectiveness of conservation actions, particularly in grassland and wetland ecosystems.
- Develop and test mechanisms for ensuring information about the status and value and natural ecosystems informs national and provincial conservation and development programs, as well as local adaptive management.

4. Develop and implement a financing mechanism to increase community and civil society engagement in the following conservation activities

- Conduct targeted research to answer urgent questions about the status of globally threatened species and natural ecosystem function, particularly aquatic ecosystems in the Lancang and its tributaries.
- Pilot and amplify community-based conservation actions that emphasize management of sacred lands, watershed forests, grasslands, and wetlands.
- Develop co-management mechanisms for formal protected areas that enable community participation.
- Engage the media as a tool for increasing public awareness of environmental issues.

LOIs for the fourth priority theme will be accepted on an invitation only basis.

Eligibility

Letters of Inquiry should focus on the Lancang Basin and address these thematic priorities. Activities in the Tibetan Autonomous Region are not eligible.

We will consider initiatives that extend outside the Lancang Basin, where they present opportunities to engage civil society in major projects and programs that might influence a policy or sector relevant to conservation within the basin.

Organizations may submit more than one Letter of Inquiry.

CSD typically make three-year grants with the possibility of renewal based on performance and continued relevance of the project.

Please note that the Foundation does not support political activities or attempts to influence action on specific legislation. We do not provide scholarships or tuition assistance for undergraduate, graduate, or postgraduate studies; nor do we support annual fundraising drives, institutional benefits, honorary functions, or similar projects.

As is now the case with most charities in the United States who make grants to organizations based outside the United States, the Foundation checks the names of foreign based grantees, and the principal officers and directors of such grantees, against one or more lists maintained by the U.S. government, the European Union, and the United Nations, which contain the names determined by such entities to be terrorist organizations or individual terrorists. This process is a result of legislation passed by the U.S. Congress, Executive Orders issued by the President, and suggested guidelines issued by the U.S. Department of the Treasury. A memorandum on this topic is available upon request.

Review Process

All eligible Letters of Inquiry will be evaluated by the Foundation. The Foundation may ask outside experts or persons with relevant professional experience to review them or provide input.

Decisions to invite full proposals based on the submitted LOIs and/or award grants will be made by the Foundation.

All material submitted becomes the property of the MacArthur Foundation.

Deadlines

LOIs should be submitted no later than June 15, 2013 by e-mail to: 4answers@macfound.org

A suggested LOI format is available at:

http://www.macfound.org/site/c.lkLXJ8MQKrH/b.913959/k.E1BE/Applying_for_Grants.htm