

The Boating Infrastructure Grant Program



BIG

**Additional guidance for developing a
competitive BIG Tier II proposal**

(January 9, 2015)

Suggested Template for Development of a Boating Infrastructure Grant/Tier II Proposal

Project proponents are not required to use this template to submit proposals for consideration for funding through the Boating Infrastructure Grant Program (BIG). However, if used, this template may simplify the process and will help guide the preparer to address all of the issues that must be addressed to fully satisfy the needs of a comprehensive **BIG Tier II** grant application. Further information about the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program, and the BIG program specifically (authorizing legislation, grant guidelines, etc.), is available in the **Federal Aid Toolkit** at:

<http://training.fws.gov/fedaid/toolkit/toolkit.pdf>

A. TIPS for writing competitive BIG Tier II Grant Proposals

Writing and presenting a well-organized competitive proposal can make the difference between winning an award and not. The following simple guidelines are fundamental in proposal preparation. These guidelines are a compilation of comments and feedback from ranking panel members over several years. If your proposal falls within these guidelines, distractions caused by poor presentation will be avoided and the merit of your proposal will be clear to the reviewers.

1. The first Basic Rule: READ CAREFULLY AND FOLLOW THE GUIDANCE ACCOMPANYING THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF GRANT AVAILABILITY.

2. **Make it easy for the reviewers.** If reviewers can not readily see the merit of your proposal it will not score well.
3. **Clearly address each ranking criterion.** Scoring will be based upon how well each criterion is addressed.
4. **Include a separate "ranking criteria summary."** Make it easy for a reviewer to evaluate how well the proposal meets ranking and eligibility criteria. A summary showcases the information in one, easy to find location rather than distributed through the text.
5. **Maximize the non-federal match.** Extra points are awarded to proposals

that reduce the Federal share of the total project cost.

6. **Prorate Eligible costs among users.** If eligible work will also benefit other users (Le., seasonal slip holders, ferry boats), the cost must be shared and prorated.
7. **Include letters or other evidence of firm commitments by partner for cash and in-kind cost shares.** Partners are not *partners* unless they provide something of material benefit to the project.
8. **Do not include letters of support.** Letters of support carry no weight in the scoring process, unless they are letters of commitment of cash or in-kind match from partners.
9. **Insure that work proposed is eligible.** Make sure that the activities proposed are eligible under the grant Program. For instance, dredging of a marina basin is not eligible; using land as match is not allowable. If you are not sure, ask.
10. **Follow the format specified in the guidance.** Unless otherwise specified, use the standard Need, Objectives, Expected Results and Benefits, and Approach format to describe your proposal (see B.2 below). This is the format most familiar to the federal staff who will review your proposal for final approval.
11. **Include location maps and project layout.** - Schematics (maps, aerial photos, preliminary plans, etc.) that clearly show location and layout of proposed activities, are truly "worth a thousand words" when describing facility construction or land alteration.
12. **Number all pages.** Make it easy for a reviewer to locate important sections.
13. **Limit the number of pages - be brief, but complete.** There is a 20 page limit for the narrative section (see RFA, pages 7-8)
14. **Omit fancy binders, tabs, and attachments.** The proposal will be reviewed by persons from all over the country. If circulated to the reviewers, only the actual proposal will be photocopied; fancy binders, tabs, and most attachments will likely not be sent to the actual review team.

B. Proposal Components (Tier I and Tier II)

1. **Application for Federal Assistance** (or, "Standard Form 424" - available from the *Federal Aid Toolkit*; to be used by State agency coordinator for the BIG Program).
2. **Standard Grant Narrative** - A project narrative which describes in specific detail the work to be accomplished in the proposal is required. Organize the

narrative into *these* sections:

- a. **Need** -- Discuss the need for the project. Why is the project being undertaken, and how will the project benefit the public. Focus on the current and future demand for transient facilities in the area and how this demand is not being met by the facilities currently available.
 - b. **Objective** - Include a concise description of what is to be accomplished; include a description of all facilities for which funding is requested.
 - c. **Expected Results/Benefits** -- Demonstrate how the facilities described in the *Objectives* section fulfill the need; include all *reasonable* benefits to the public. This may include economic benefits to the community.
 - d. **Approach** -- Provide a detailed discussion of planned work; be specific about numbers, dimensions, orientation, etc. of piers, slips, and docks, and any other facilities to be provided. If applicable, include a discussion of the existing facilities and how the new facilities will fit within them.
 - e. **Location** -- Be specific; include county, city, and general locale.
 - f. **Estimated Costs** - Prorate cost if necessary. If eligible work will also benefit other users (i.e., seasonal slip holders, cruise boats, etc.), the cost must be shared and prorated among users. Provide an estimate of all costs, including a breakdown of partners who will be providing the match and in what form (cash or in-kind). If the match will be in-kind, be specific about what it is, and how the value was determined. If possible, include a letter from the organization/individual committing to be a partner. (Note: Do not include letters of support that *do not* have a cost share commitment.)
 - g. **Contacts** - List primary project proponents with addresses, phone numbers, and e-mail addresses.
3. **Addressing the Criteria: Tier II Proposals** (50 CFR86.60) - Proposed work must construct or renovate tie-up facilities for transient, non-trailerable (26 ft and over) recreational vessels. Prospective grantees must *clearly* address all criteria. \1
- a. **Partnerships** - maximum 15 pts (1 partner = 5 pts, 2= 10 pts, ~3= 15 pts) *Partners* are defined as organizations, agencies, or individuals, other than the Fish and Wildlife Service and the lead State agency, which *bring something of value* to the project (money, in-kind contributions, etc.). To qualify, a partner's contribution must be reasonable and necessary to accomplish the work proposed.
 - b. **Innovativeness** - maximum 15 pts (1 example of innovativeness - 5 pts; 2 examples - 10 pts; 3 or more examples - 15 pts) - To be judged

innovative, the example must provide a sense of vision or an idea of value that has not routinely been included in these types of boating access projects; explain how the innovative item or activity will benefit the project.

// An additional criterion, the creation of a *plan* to identify, construct, renovate, and/or maintain tie-up facilities (worth an additional 15 points) is not currently included in ranking criteria.

- c. **Non-Federal match** - maximum 15 pts (26 > 35% non-federal match = 5 pts; 36 > 49% = 10 pts; ~ 50% = 15 pts). Include only the non-federal value of contributed cash or in-kind match. Contributions must be reasonable and necessary to completion of the proposed BIG project; do not include items or costs which are not directly related to the project.
- d. **Cost Efficiency** - (sliding scale of 0-10 points) Proposals are cost efficient when the project features add value to an existing facility (assumes an existing facility would require less infrastructure development than a completely new site);
 - o 0-5 points are awarded for adding to existing facilities, with most points for a larger array of facilities;
 - o *Efficiency* determination is also based on the Federal cost per slip or docking area. « \$12,500 per space = 5 pts; \$12,501-\$24,999/space = 4 pts; \$25,000-\$54,999 = 3 pts; \$55,000-\$79,999 = 2 pts; \$80,000-\$104,999 = 1 pt, > \$104,999 = 0 pts.)
- e. **Way Point link or Safe Harbor** - (10 points, all or none) -The proposed project must provide a significant link to, or safe harbor within or along, a cruising route. Include in the proposal a description of expected use patterns, where transient boaters may be coming from and where they may go after using the facility.
- f. **Access to Cultural/Natural Resources** - (step scale, 0-15 points; 5 points for each of local, regional, or national attraction) - The proposal must mention and *give examples* of attractions (within reasonable distance) that could be accessed from the project. These must be easily accessible.
- g. **Economic Impact** -- (sliding scale of 1-5 points) - The proposal must give specific examples of economic benefit to the community, such as the expected number and estimated value of each *overnight* stay to the local economy. The economic benefit estimate is based upon the impact of the BIG project, not the marina as a whole.
- h. **Multi-State Coordination** - (5 points, all or nothing) - To be awarded points the proposal must cite a formal plan or agreement between or among states that results in a coordinated effort for location of tie-up facilities; the plan must be included or referenced by title in the proposal.

4. **Maps** -Include maps of the general, regional, and specific locale, as well as a schematic of the proposed project; aerial photos are *helpful*

i. Dredging costs must not exceed 10% of total BIG project costs, including match. Any dredge associate costs are included in this restriction, including the cost of divers, spoil disposal, dredge ponds, etc. Include budget information for dredging in your application, so that we can determine that your project meets this requirement.

ii. Eligible dredging costs are limited to those associated with dredging the most direct route from the tie-up facility to the maintained channel or open water (this would allow you to dredge where slips, day docks, mooring buoys, floating docks, floating piers, dinghy docks, or other eligible boating infrastructure facility for transient, nontrailerable recreational vessels will be, as well as from these facilities to the maintained channel or open water);

iii. Maintenance dredging, which is dredging to maintain a channel after having received BIG funds for one-time dredging, is ineligible;

iv. Include an explanation of why dredging is necessary and reasonable to meet the project objectives in your application, including the need, dredging method, and planned maintenance of the dredging project;

v. The proposed dredged area must be part of a navigable water body or channel. Dredging may restore channels, but must not create new access;

vi. You must dredge the area to a minimum draft of 6 feet at the lowest point during the lowest tide or fluctuation. You must meet the required 6 feet depth at project completion. You must maintain the dredged area to meet this minimum requirement for 20 years;

vii. Maintenance of the channel and costs associated with the 20 year maintenance are responsibilities of the grantee (maintaining a dredged area is not an eligible cost under BIG);

viii. You must prorate dredge costs if boats that do not meet the definition of transient, non-trailerable recreational vessel will travel the dredged area; and

ix. After selection, but prior to grant approval, you may be required to forward us copies of permits and approvals needed for the dredging project.

<http://wsfrprograms.fws.gov/Subpages/GrantPrograms/BIG/BIG-NOF A13-Tier2.pdf>