



2009 *Opportunities for Action* Local Implementation Grants: GRANT GUIDELINES

Local Implementation Grants

The 2009 Local Implementation Grants support local community involvement in the implementation of the comprehensive management plan, *Opportunities for Action: An Evolving Plan for the Future of the Lake Champlain Basin*. Three types of grants are available: (1) **Pollution Prevention or Aquatic Invasive Species Spread Prevention Grants**, (2) **Organizational Support Grants**, and (3) **Education and Outreach Grants**.

PLEASE NOTE: These guidelines are not applicable to other LCBP grant programs.

Descriptions of the three types of Local Implementation grants are provided below. The purpose, eligibility information, and selection criteria are clearly listed for each grant category. This is followed by general information that pertains to all grants. These guidelines are provided to help you prepare competitive grant applications. Please read this information carefully to match proposed projects with the most appropriate grant category before proceeding with your application. We encourage you to contact the LCBP if you need further explanation of the requirements and policies summarized here.

No more than one unique application may be submitted by the same organization under any category. Each application must be submitted to one (and only one) of the following categories: Pollution Prevention or Aquatic Invasive Species Spread Prevention, Organizational Support, or Education and Outreach.

Groups with current LCBP contracts must be in good standing (this means that all deliverables that are due have been received by LCBP) to be eligible to apply for additional funds. New projects must be for work that is distinct from currently contracted work in both objectives and deliverables. Extensions of ongoing projects with new tasks and deliverables will also be considered, but groups must demonstrate satisfactory progress on the current grant before a contract will be amended to include additional work.

PLEASE NOTE: All applications MUST be received in the LCBP office in Grand Isle, VT in both electronic and hardcopy formats by 4:30 PM, December 4th, 2009. Faxed submissions will *not* be accepted.

Lake Champlain Basin Program and *Opportunities for Action*

The Lake Champlain Basin Program (LCBP) is a partnership among the States of New York and Vermont, the Province of Quebec, the US Environmental Protection Agency, the New England Interstate Water Pollution Control Commission, other federal and local government agencies, and many local groups, both public and private. Created by the Lake Champlain Special Designation Act of 1990 and reauthorized in 2002, the LCBP's goal is to work cooperatively to protect and enhance the environmental integrity and the social and economic benefits of the Lake Champlain Basin, primarily through implementation of *Opportunities for Action*. Successful implementation of the plan is achieved by developing partnerships among natural resource agencies, citizens, and other lake and watershed stakeholders throughout the Basin. Since 1992, the LCBP has sponsored a variety of local projects.

Opportunities for Action calls for actions addressing water quality, toxic substances, living natural resources, recreation and cultural heritage resources, economics, education and outreach, monitoring, and data management. The plan also calls for the active involvement of local communities. The four highest priorities in the plan are to:

- reduce the amount of phosphorus entering the Lake;
- prevent and control the release and effects of toxic substances;
- establish a comprehensive program for managing aquatic invasive species; and

- protect humans from water-related health hazards.

Opportunities for Action is available from the LCBP Office or online at <http://www.lcbp.org/>

A. Pollution Prevention or Aquatic Invasive Species Spread Prevention Grants

PURPOSE:

This grant category supports larger projects with grants up to \$10,000. Requests for more than \$10,000 will not be considered. Projects may address any of the priorities identified in *Opportunities for Action*, but those that address the following areas will rank higher in the review process:

- Reducing nonpoint source inputs of phosphorus and toxic substances from urban and agricultural areas;
- Reducing the spread and impact of non-native aquatic invasive species through demonstration of alternative control strategies, and/or establishing or expanding early detection and monitoring programs.

Anticipated Number of Awards: Approximately six (6)

ELIGIBILITY:

- Local government entities including municipal boards, commissions, or committees;
- Public or private schools or other educational institutions;
- Natural Resource Conservation Districts (VT) and Soil and Water Conservation Districts (NY);
- Organizations with 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation status, or citizen groups such as watershed or lake associations working in coordination with such an organization, that applies on their behalf and will manage the grant funds; and
- Private businesses, individuals, and state government agencies may collaborate with one of the above groups, but are not eligible to be the primary applicant under this grant program.

SELECTION CRITERIA:

Applications will be evaluated according to the following criteria, based on the information provided in your application. An external peer review committee will evaluate and rank applications for funding, and make award recommendations to the Lake Champlain Steering Committee. The Lake Champlain Steering Committee will make all decisions on project awards. The decisions of the Steering Committee are final and may not be appealed.

1. (25 points) Extent to which the project objectives address any of the priorities in *Opportunities for Action*. Proposals addressing pollution prevention and aquatic invasive species spread prevention will score highest for this criterion.
2. (25 points) Merit of the project and the extent to which the project will result in tangible benefits or improvements that can be clearly measured. Projects taking place on private land should show a clear benefit to the surrounding community.
3. (20 points) Feasibility of the proposed methods and capacity of the organization for carrying out the project.
4. (10 points) Extent to which the project will increase the capacity of local groups to continue working toward the goals of the plan beyond the period in which the project receives Basin Program funding.
5. (10 points) Extent to which the applicant demonstrates the commitment to work with other partners and/or leverage other funding sources to achieve project goals.
6. (10 points) Appropriateness and clarity of the proposed budget, relative to project objectives. The total funding request must be within the limit of the grant category. Vague or inflated budgets will not be competitive.

B. Organizational Support Grants

PURPOSE:

The Organizational Support grants provide up to \$2,000 to support increased organizational capacity and long-term effectiveness of organizations working to implement elements of *Opportunities for Action*. **Only organizations with 501(c)(3) status are eligible to apply and documentation of nonprofit status is required.** The intent of this grant category is to assist organizations with the early stages of their development or to assist organizations with a longer history to achieve a stronger operational foundation.

Anticipated Number of Awards: Approximately five (5)

ELIGIBILITY:

Specific Qualifying Information: All organizations seeking grants in this category must have nonprofit 501(c)(3) status AND must have a mission statement specifically focused on achieving water quality improvements in the Lake Champlain watershed.

Examples of Eligible Expenses:

- Purchase of software for improved database or financial management (such as GIS or bookkeeping and accounting software);
- Strategic planning or other types of board development; and
- Training of staff or volunteers for:
 - a) volunteer recruitment and management;
 - b) grant writing;
 - c) membership recruitment and retention; and
 - d) field techniques/field data collection.

Proposals for regular on-going operational expenses are not likely to be competitive.

SELECTION CRITERIA:

Applications will be evaluated according to the following criteria, based on the information provided in your application. An external peer review committee will evaluate and rank applications for funding, and make award recommendations to the Lake Champlain Steering Committee. The Lake Champlain Steering Committee will make all decisions on project awards. The decisions of the Steering Committee are final and may not be appealed.

1. (40 points) Extent to which the proposal will strengthen the capacity of eligible organizations. (See above for eligibility guidelines).
2. (30 points) Merit of the proposal and the extent to which the proposal will result in tangible benefits or improvements that can be clearly measured.
3. (30 points) Appropriateness and clarity of the proposed budget, relative to project objectives. The total funding request must be within the limit of the grant category. Vague or inflated budgets will not be considered competitive.

C. Education and Outreach Grants

PURPOSE:

The Education and Outreach Grants provide up to \$7,500 to eligible groups to inform students and/or adults about key Lake Champlain issues identified in the management plan *Opportunities for Action*. The objective is to develop awareness, knowledge, skills and commitment on a basin issue so that informed decisions and constructive actions will benefit Lake Champlain. Hands-on activities for citizens are encouraged. Requests for more than \$7,500 will not be considered.

Anticipated Number of Awards: Approximately six (6)

ELIGIBILITY:

- Local government entities including municipal boards, commissions, or committees;
- Public or private schools or other educational institutions;
- Natural Resource Conservation Districts (VT) and Soil and Water Conservation Districts (NY);
- Organizations with 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation status, or citizen groups such as watershed or lake associations working in coordination with such an organization, that applies on their behalf and will manage the grant funds; and
- Private businesses, individuals, and state government agencies may collaborate with one of the above groups, but are not eligible to be the primary applicant under this grant program.

SELECTION CRITERIA:

Applications will be evaluated according to the following criteria, based on the information provided in your application. An external peer review committee will evaluate and rank applications for funding, and make award recommendations to the Lake Champlain Steering Committee. The Lake Champlain Steering Committee will make all decisions on project awards. The decisions of the Steering Committee are final and may not be appealed.

1. (25 points) Extent to which the project will inform adults and students about Lake Champlain issues, specifically topics included in *Opportunities for Action*.
2. (20 points) Extent to which the project reaches new audiences and/or encourages hands-on activities for citizens. Extent to which the project enhances other outreach efforts in the basin (VT, NY and QC).
3. (10 points) Extent to which the applicant demonstrates the commitment to work with other partners and/or leverage other funding sources to achieve project goals. Multi-jurisdictional projects are encouraged. Projects taking place on private land should show a clear benefit to the surrounding community.
4. (10 points) Knowledge or experience with education and outreach related to Lake Champlain, and the applicant's past performance on similar projects, if applicable.
5. (25 points) Merit of the project and the extent to which the project will result in tangible products or benefits that can be measured. The proposed methods and capacity of the organization for carrying out the project should be feasible.
6. (10 points) Appropriateness and clarity of the proposed budget, relative to project objectives. The total funding request must be within the limit of the grant category. Vague or inflated budgets will not be competitive. Clarity and conciseness of proposal, adherence to format and relevance to RFP.

NOTE: Grant funding is not eligible for admission fees.

Grant Guidelines for all Local Implementation Grants

All local grants will be reviewed by an external review committee and evaluated based on the selection criteria listed above each grant category. The following guidelines pertain to all Local Implementation grant applications. It is provided to help you submit a competitive grant application.

Letters of Participation and Support

- Signed letters confirming the participation of each major partner involved with your project (if any) must be attached to your application.
- Up to three additional letters of support may also be included.
- All letters must be submitted with the application.
- Be aware that if projects will take place on private property, written landowner permission will be required at the time of workplan development.

Local Match Contribution

- A non-federal local match contribution of 25% or more is suggested for all grant awards. It may be in the form of either funds or in-kind services (including volunteer time). **This match is not required but will make applications significantly more competitive.**
- Applicants should clearly document the intended source(s) and use(s) of such match contributions in the budget section of your application.
- General volunteer hours (work days, trainings, etc.) for in-kind match are usually calculated at \$10-15 per hour. Specialized volunteer work (computer consulting, accounting, etc.) can be calculated at a higher rate.
- Funds from federal government sources may not be used for matching contributions.

Project Workplan Development

Once notified by the LCBP of a grant award, applicants must subsequently submit a more detailed project workplan, which must then be approved by the LCBP and US EPA, before receiving funding. The workplan, which the applicant must submit **within sixty days** after the award notification, describes the project's methods, timeline, deliverables and budget. If a project is selected for funding, LCBP staff will provide the grant recipient with workplan guidance.

Project Time Period

Award notification is expected by January 31, 2010. Workplans must be submitted within sixty days following award notification. Projects must be initiated within six months of award notification. Usually, projects should be completed within one year of the official project start date. Other time periods will be considered if warranted.

Quality Assurance Project Plans

An approved Quality Assurance Project Plan is required for all projects involving collection of new or assembly of existing environmental data. This plan must be submitted and approved by LCBP before any data collection work is begun. Please contact the Eric Howe, LCBP Technical Coordinator, at ehowe@lcbp.org or 802-372-3233 prior to submitting your application if your proposed project involves data collection or assembly.

Payment Procedures

- LCBP funds will be available on a reimbursement basis only in response to your invoices documenting the eligible costs you have incurred.
- Groups should expect a 4 to 6 week turn-around time from when the LCBP receives your invoice to the time when you receive payment.

- **The Basin Program cannot reimburse for work completed prior to the official contract start date or after the contract end date.** If you anticipate needing reimbursement after the contract end date, contact the LCBP immediately to discuss whether you may be eligible for an amendment to your project that extends the timeline.

Reporting and Publicity

Your contract will require you to submit brief progress reports at the close of each calendar quarter and a final project report at the conclusion of your grant. Also, you will be required to prepare press releases citing the LCBP as a funding source at the project's inception and conclusion.

LCBP Funding Credits

All press materials and printed products from your project must acknowledge the Lake Champlain Basin Program and the Environmental Protection Agency. Inclusion of the LCBP logo, available from the LCBP website (<http://www.lcbp.org/granttool.htm>), is required on all published materials supported by the grant.

Appropriate Use of Funds

About Direct and Indirect Costs:

The LCBP encourages groups to budget costs that are associated with the project as direct expenses, including salaries, travel, project supplies, mailings, phone costs, office supplies, etc. However, use of some grant funds for general overhead or indirect costs is allowable, subject to both the provisions of OMB Circular A-87 and LCBP approval. If you need further guidance, contact the LCBP or look online at

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/circulars/a087/a087-all.html>. This web page is very helpful. You will find that **Attachment A, Section D – Composition** provides a nice overview of Direct and Indirect costs, **Section E** gives the definition of Direct Costs, and **Section F** gives the definition of Indirect Costs.

Restrictions

Grant funds **cannot be used** to produce for-profit products or to cover costs associated with regulatory compliance or direct fundraising efforts. Grant funds also cannot be used for land purchases, endowment funds, or lobbying or legislative advocacy of any kind.

LCBP Staff Support

Because they are not members of the review committees making award decisions, LCBP staff are available to assist applicants in the interpretation of these application guidelines in the development of their applications. **All** applicants are encouraged to contact the LCBP office before submitting applications. Once awards are announced, LCBP staff can assist with the development of a more detailed workplan and Quality Assurance Project Plan, as needed, and will be available throughout the duration of the project.

Partial Funding

Each year, the LCBP receives applications for many more worthwhile projects than its resources can support. Because the LCBP seeks to support as many of these projects as possible, grant review committees may recommend offering only a portion of the funding requested in an application. In such cases, the LCBP will provide guidance to the applicant on how the awarded grant funds should be applied. **Vague or inflated budgets will not be competitive.**

Other Grant Programs

In addition to these grants, the LCBP sponsors other grant programs. There are also several other funding opportunities for projects within the Lake Champlain Basin. Please visit the LCBP website (www.lcbp.org/grants.htm) for more information.