Release Date: October 28, 2015

**Lake Champlain Basin Program Announcement**

**Request for Proposals**

*Increasing Agricultural Engineering Capacity for Project Implementation in the Lake Champlain Basin*

The Lake Champlain Basin Program (LCBP) is pleased to announce a Request for Proposals (RFP) for services to increase agricultural engineering capacity for project implementation in the Lake Champlain Basin. Up to **$48,900** is available for this project. The successful applicant will create a curriculum that instructs private firms about current NRCS agricultural engineering standards. Once completed, certified firms will be registered on a public list so farms may directly access their services. This work is applicable to Chapter 4 of the LCBP’s long-term management plan - *Opportunities for Action: An Evolving Plan for the Future of the Lake Champlain Basin.* This project is supported by funds awarded to the New England Interstate Water Pollution Control Commission (NEIWPCC) by the US Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA) in support of the Lake Champlain Basin Program.

This Request for Proposals is available from the Lake Champlain Basin Program website. Look for the link on our homepage at [www.lcbp.org](http://www.lcbp.org). To receive a copy of the RFP via U.S. Postal Service, contact the Lake Champlain Basin Program office at (802) 372-3213 or toll free at (800) 468-LCBP in New York and Vermont.

To facilitate the review process, applicants must submit proposals in electronic format ONLY. Please see the RFP and the attached proposal format information for complete details. Proposals in improper format may not be considered.

**DEADLINE NOTICE:**

Electronic versions (no facsimiles *or* hardcopies will be accepted) of proposals must be RECEIVED by the Lake Champlain Basin Program office by 4:30pm EST on:

**December 10, 2015**

LATE OR INCOMPLETE PROPOSALS WILL NOT BE CONSIDERED.

The successful applicant will be notified by early February, 2016. LCBP anticipates granting one (1) award from this RFP.

**Lake Champlain Basin Program Announcement**

**Request for Proposals**

*Increasing Agricultural Engineering Capacity for Project Implementation in the Lake Champlain Basin*

**0. Overview**

Congress designated Lake Champlain as a resource of national significance with the Lake Champlain Special Designation Act of 1990. The Special Designation Act also established the Lake Champlain Basin Program (LCBP) and authorized it to receive direct support from U.S. EPA under the Clean Water Act. The LCBP works in partnership with government agencies from New York, Vermont, and Québec, private organizations, local communities, and individuals to coordinate and fund efforts that benefit the Lake Champlain Basin’s water quality, fisheries, wetlands, wildlife, recreation, and cultural resources. These efforts are guided by the comprehensive management plan *Opportunities for Action: An Evolving Plan for the Future of the Lake Champlain Basin*.

Since 1992, the New England Interstate Water Pollution Control Commission (NEIWPCC) has served as the primary program administrator of LCBP at the request of the LCBP’s Steering Committee, and administers the program’s personnel and finances. NEIWPCC is a congressionally authorized not-for-profit interstate organization whose membership includes all six New England states and New York State and whose mission is to help its member states to realize their individual and collective clean water program goals.

1. **Background**

The USDA-NRCS has recently been provided additional funding to work on agricultural water quality projects in the Vermont portion of the Lake Champlain Basin. Currently the Agency of Agriculture, Farms and Markets in Vermont (VAAFM) and VT-NRCS have backlogs on farm requests that require engineering resources to create designs that meets NRCS standards. Each agency is working on increasing internal capacity, but currently the workload far outweighs the staffing potential. This project will provide a training mechanism to involve private sector engineering firms in agricultural engineering projects in a more cohesive manner. Typical private sector engineering costs are currently too high to be affordable by farmers. Anecdotal evidence has shown that private firms that understand the requirements within the agricultural sector to design projects to NRCS standards have identified methods to keep their own costs in check. With appropriate training of private sector firms, the large backlog of projects that currently exists could be greatly reduced, increasing the number of best management practices in place on the landscape while simultaneously generating work for the private sector. This RFP solicits services to increase agricultural engineering capacity in the private sector by providing training and assistance to private sector engineering firms. These firms can then better adapt agricultural engineering projects that are compliant with current NRCS-VT standards into their service model. Ultimately, engineering design oversight will be provided by VAAFM engineers. VAAFM staff also will connect farms to private farms for construction of the approved designs.

1. **Project Tasks and Deliverables**

The Lake Champlain Basin Program seeks proposals for services to develop training programs for engineering firms to increase private sector capacity to offer services for agricultural engineering projects. A contractor will be selected to create a web-based curriculum, provide an in-class training and coordinate trainings that can be used by the private sector to register themselves onto a list of firms that have completed the NRCS engineering standards training.

The successful applicant will work in close consultation with VAAFM and NRCS staff throughout the duration of this project. Ultimately, VAAFM staff likely will assume management of the training program.

Anticipated tasks will include the following elements:

1. Develop a web-based curriculum, including some in-class training time. The initial in-class training will consist of NRCS and VAAFM engineers as well as private sector participants. Pre- and post-training assessments will be offered to participants to inform future training programs.
2. Develop a self-registration web form for firms that have completed the NRCS engineering standards training
3. Offer the curriculum and training on a minimum of two occasions or for a period of 6 months.
4. **Summary of Other Requirements for the Selected Proposal**

The selected applicant will be required to complete the following additional tasks:

1. Following initial notification of the award, a workplan must meet LCBP approval before a contract agreement can be executed and the work begun. The workplan will detail the logistical elements of the project, including tasks and corresponding deliverables and the project timeline. Information about the LCBP grant process, workplan development guidelines, and reporting requirements can be found on the LCBP website at: <http://www.lcbp.org/about-us/grants-rfps/grant-toolkit/>. The successful applicant will enter into a contract with NEIWPCC in order to complete the work and will be compensated based on the completion of task-based workplan deliverables.
2. The successful applicant will provide brief quarterly reports documenting progress on each objective and task in the project (see attached Proposal Format Requirements). A final report fully documenting the project’s results will be required at project completion.
3. When approved, the final report will be edited for content and style in consultation with the successful respondent and may be published as part of the Lake Champlain Basin Program’s Technical Report Series, located here: <http://www.lcbp.org/media-center/publications-library/technical-reports/>. Some content of this report may also be used for future LCBP public outreach materials.
4. The successful applicant will complete the project according to the following schedule\*:

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| --- | --- |
| Proposals Due to LCBP | 4:30 PM EST, December 10, 2015 |
| Applicants Notified of Funding Decisions  | Early February, 2016 |
| Detailed Project Workplan Due  | Late February, 2016 |
| Project Start Date  | Mid-March, 2016 |
| Project Deliverables and Final Report Due | May 1, 2017 |

\*Schedule is subject to change.

1. All materials and work products, regardless of physical form or characteristics, produced as a result of this project shall be made available to LCBP, NEIWPCC, and the EPA in the file format specified in the workplan. LCBP, NEIWPCC, and the EPA shall have an unrestricted right to use any materials, software, maps, studies, reports, and other products or data generated using assistance funds or specified to be delivered. The contractor shall not obtain, attempt to obtain, or file for a patent, copyright, trademark or any other interest in any such materials or work products without the expressed, written consent of LCBP and NEIWPCC, and any other approvals required by state or federal law. Reports and other deliverables will credit LCBP, NEIWPCC, and EPA as funding partners for any work completed under the project contract.
2. GIS data produced under this project must adhere to the requirements of LCBP’s QAPP and EPA’s National Geospatial Data Policy (see <http://www.epa.gov/geospatial/docs/National_Geospatial_Data_Policy.pdf>). Specifically, the selected contractor must provide documentation for all produced data, including source information for each digital data layer and specific information about the data layer itself. GIS data produced under this project will be submitted to NEIWPCC as a deliverable.
3. If this project is funded through a U.S. EPA Assistance Agreement with NEIWPCC, the project may not use these funds to support a survey without completion of an Information Collection Request (ICR) describing the survey. The ICR must be submitted to the LCBP Project Officer for referral to the U.S. EPA Office of Management and Budget (OMB) for review and approval. This is an extensive process that can take several months to complete. A survey is defined as the collection of identical information from ten or more non-Federal respondents within a 12-month period. OMB approval must be received before any survey activities supported by NEIWPCC funds can begin.
4. NEIWPCC requires its contractors to maintain workers compensation and liability insurance. More details will be provided to the successful applicant at the time of contracting.
5. **Eligibility**

Eligible organizations include colleges, universities, nonprofit organizations, for-profit companies, and non-federal government agencies. The selected contractor will be responsible for the completion of all project tasks, though subcontracted work may be requested in writing to the LCBP Project Officer. Individuals and representatives from organizations that participated in the development or review of this RFP and its contents are ineligible to apply.

1. **Proposal Evaluation and Selection Criteria**

Proposals received in response to this RFP will undergo an external peer review, and will be judged according to the following criteria:

* + 1. Demonstrated technical knowledge of existing NRCS engineering standards in the Vermont-portion of the Lake Champlain watershed.
		2. Technical merit and applicability of the proposed product toward the priority objectives identified in this RFP.
		3. Experience in developing training curricula and operating training programs.
		4. Demonstrated ability to accomplish the deliverables outlined in Section II.
		5. Demonstrated experience working VAAFM and NRCS
		6. Potential for the project to increase private sector capacity for agricultural engineering projects in compliance with NRCS standards.
		7. Clarity, conciseness and adherence to the proposal guidelines.
		8. Demonstrated ability to create documents and user-friendly products that are accessible to and can be used by local partners working to increase agricultural engineering capacity in the Lake Champlain Basin.
		9. Appropriateness of budget, tasks, and budget justification, describing how the funds awarded will be used to produce the set of deliverables described in Section II.
1. **Available Funds and Match Requirements**

A total of $48,900 may be made available for this project. Proposals with budgets that exceed this amount will not be considered. Applicants may budget costs that are associated with the project as direct expenses, including personnel costs, travel, project supplies, meeting expenses, and subcontracts (subcontracts only with prior permission from LCBP). Some allocation of project funds for indirect costs also is acceptable. However, **for projects in response to this RFP, the indirect budget must not exceed 21% of the direct project budget.** No in-kind or cash match is required, though match may be considered favorably during budget review. LCBP anticipates granting one (1) award from this RFP.

**VII. Notification of Award**

Award notification to applicants is expected in early February, 2016. The award recipient may be asked to submit a revised workplan, timeline, and budget at this time. Project work cannot begin until a contract is signed by both parties. LCPB and NEIWPCC will not pay for expenses incurred prior to the contract start date. Payment for costs incurred will be on a reimbursement basis per the contract payment schedule and contingent upon completion of quarterly progress reports and project deliverables.

1. **Period of Performance**

Work is expected to begin **mid-March, 2016** and is to be completed no later than **May 1, 2017**.

1. **Schedule and Requirements for Proposal Submission**
2. Please follow the format outlined in the attached Technical Proposal Format Requirements.
3. Hardcopies of the proposal will NOT be accepted on or before the submission deadline. Editable electronic copies ONLY will be accepted and must be received via email in Microsoft Word or Word-compatible format by 4:30pm EST on **December 10, 2015** to ehowe@lcbp.org**.**
4. **Contact Information**

Direct all proposals and other inquiries to:

*Eric Howe*

*NEIWPCC Environmental Analyst*

*Lake Champlain Basin Program Technical Coordinator*

54 West Shore Rd., Grand Isle, VT  05458

p: 802-372-3213; f: 802-372-3233

ehowe@lcbp.org ; [www.neiwpcc.org](http://www.neiwpcc.org) ; [www.lcbp.org](http://www.lcbp.org)

**Technical Proposal Format Requirements**

Proposals should adhere to the following format and should not exceed a 10 page maximum length (font size 12), NOT including budget information, references cited and investigator resumes. Incomplete proposals will be eliminated from consideration. Pages in excess of the stated maximum will not be reviewed.

**TITLE:** - Concise and descriptive.

**POINT OF CONTACT:** Name, position, organization, address, telephone, fax and email of the person who will be the point of contact.

**AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE:** Name, position, organization address, telephone, fax and email of the person who is authorized to sign a contract on behalf of the applicant.

**ABSTRACT:** Brief description of proposed work.

**INTRODUCTION:** Overview of what the project is and what it will accomplish in relation to the RFP.

**OBJECTIVES AND TASKS:** List the project's objectives and describe in detail the tasks that will be performed relative to each objective, including methods and approaches.

**DELIVERABLES:** Detailed description of the planned products from each task of the project. Quarterly progress reports and a final report are required deliverables.

**SCHEDULE:** Timeline showing anticipated dates for completion of the major tasks and deliverables. Quarterly progress reports are due on the last day of December, March, June, and September. Work is to be completed within the specified performance period in the RFP.

**TECHNICAL REFERENCES CITED:** List all references used for the proposal (not included in the 10 page maximum total for the proposal).

**CURRICULUM VITAE/RESUME OF PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATORS:** Include up to 3-5 references for prior work pertinent to the proposed project. Please limit to one page per investigator; not included in the 10 page maximum total for the proposal.

**DETAILED BUDGET JUSTIFICATION:** Cost breakdown by major budget categories (i.e. personnel, equipment), linking costs to specific tasks/deliverables wherever possible, as seen in the example budget below. Breakdown should show costs to be covered by the LCBP award and other sources (if applicable), as well as any match amounts and totals. (1 page, not included in the 10 page maximum total for the proposal). Task-based budget templates are available on the LCBP website: <http://www.lcbp.org/about-us/grants-rfps/grant-toolkit/>

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| --- |
| **Budget Spreadsheet for LCBP Grants: Line Item by Task/Deliverable\*** |
|  | Task 1 | Task 2 | Task 3 | LCBP Grant Total | Proposed Match (if any) | Project Total (Grant + Match) |
| **Personnel** | $1,000 |  | $1,000 | $1,000 | $1,000 | $2,000 |
| **Fringe (x% of Personnel)** | $300 |  | $600 | $900 |  | $900 |
| **Travel** | $300 |  | $250 | $300 | $250 | $550 |
| **Supplies** |  | $1,250 |  | $1,000 | $250 | $1,250 |
| **Professional Services** |  | $10,000 |  | $10,000 |  | $10,000 |
| **Total Direct** | $1,600 | $11,250 | $1,850 | $13,200 | $1,500 | $14,700 |
| **Indirect (y% of direct)** | $240 | $1,688 | $278 | $2,205 | $0 | $2,205 |
| **TOTAL BUDGET** | $1,840 | $12,938 | $2,128 | $15,405 | $1,500 | $16,905 |

**\*The budget numbers in this table are used only for the purpose of example.**