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Lake Champlain Basin Program Announcement

Request for Pre-Proposals: Research for Clean Water and Healthy Ecosystems

The Lake Champlain Basin Program (LCBP), in partnership with NEIWPC, is pleased to announce a Request for Pre-Proposals for services to further the mission of the LCBP and address the research tasks outlined in our management plan, [Opportunities for Action](#). The total request for each project may range from \$25,000 to \$300,000.

The pre-proposal should be a two-page document to introduce the research project, adhering to the format requirements below. After review of the submitted pre-proposals, a subset of applicants will be asked to submit a full proposal for funding consideration for projects to begin in early 2024 (see timeframe table in Section IV below). Pre-proposals not invited for full proposal consideration in this cycle may be revised and submitted for future funding opportunities. All awards are subject to available funding.

LCBP seeks pre-proposals for projects that address any research-oriented strategies and tasks outlined in [Opportunities for Action](#). Note that research projects may have an implementation or planning component, including pilot studies or studies on implementation efficacy. LCBP is particularly interested in funding projects that address the following research priorities (priorities are not listed in order of importance):

1. Research to understand the root causes of environmental trends in the Lake Champlain Basin, including in-lake trends and tributary loading trends.
2. Research to increase understanding of groundwater transport of nutrients and contaminants in the Lake Champlain Basin through monitoring and modeling efforts.
3. Research to develop innovative watershed or in-lake management approaches likely to improve water quality, including engineering solutions, socio-economic studies, and/or cost-benefit analyses for proposed approaches.
4. Research to develop new and innovative aquatic invasive species (AIS) spread prevention programs and control technologies capable of addressing real and potential AIS impacts, including sea lamprey, to the Lake Champlain ecosystem and fishery, human health, and the regional economy.
5. Research to improve understanding of AIS impacts to Lake Champlain's ecosystem and economy under climate change predictions.

We anticipate these projects will be supported with Federal Fiscal Year 2023 funds awarded to NEIWPC by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Clean Water Act Section 120 base funding and with Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) funding support and the Great Lakes Fishery Commission in support of the Lake Champlain Basin Program. This request for pre-proposals is available at the [Lake Champlain Basin Program website](#).

PRE-PROPOSAL DEADLINE NOTICE: Applicants must submit proposals via the online form [at this link](#) no later than 12pm (noon) EST on November 11, 2022.

Late or incomplete pre-proposals will not be considered.

Lake Champlain Basin Program

Request for Pre-Proposals: Research for Clean Water and Healthy Ecosystems

Overview of Lake Champlain Basin Program and NEIWPC

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 the U.S. EPA under the Clean Water Act. LCBP coordinates and funds efforts that benefit the Lake Champlain Basin's water quality, fisheries, economy, wetlands, wildlife, recreation, and cultural resources, and works in partnership with government agencies, private organizations, local communities, and individuals from New York, Vermont, and Québec. 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, NEIWPC has served as the primary program administrator of LCBP at the request of the Lake Champlain Steering Committee and administers the program's personnel and finances. NEIWPC is a regional commission that helps the states of the Northeast preserve and advance water quality. NEIWPC engages and convenes water quality professionals and other interested parties from New England and New York to collaborate on water, wastewater, and environmental science challenges across shared regions, ecosystems, and areas of expertise.

I. Grant award process

LCBP seeks two-page pre-proposals for research projects that address any research-oriented strategy identified in *Opportunities for Action* and that contribute toward the LCBP mission. Pre-proposals will be evaluated through a competitive process; a subset of pre-proposal applicants will be asked to submit an eight-page full proposal, with a fully developed budget and anticipated project outputs and outcomes. Grant award recipients will be selected from the pool of full proposals and successful projects will begin in early 2024. The aim of this process is to invite a wide range of innovative and effective research projects that will address the complex challenges facing the Lake Champlain Basin.

Applicants may choose the most appropriate total request amount for their project. Requests ranging from \$25,000 to \$300,000 will be accepted. Please note that if an applicant is asked to submit a full proposal, the total request amount in the full proposal must be equal to or less than the total request in the pre-proposal unless written consent is obtained from LCBP. If your project concept is focused on planning or direct implementation, please respond to our RFP for Clean Water and Healthy Ecosystems Planning and Implementation Projects. Please visit <http://lcbp.org/grants> or contact LCBP for information on other grant opportunities.

Questions and answers regarding this request will be hosted on the [LCBP Grants webpage](#).

Please feel free to contact Dr. Matthew Vaughan, LCBP Chief Scientist (mvaughan@lcbp.org) with any questions.

II. Priorities for funding

LCBP seeks pre-proposals for projects that address any research-oriented strategies or tasks outlined in *Opportunities for Action* (<http://plan.lcbp.org>). Note that research projects may have an implementation or planning component, including pilot studies or studies on implementation efficacy. For this funding year, the Lake Champlain Steering Committee has identified the research priorities for funding listed below. Projects that address any of these research priorities will receive additional points in the review process (priorities are not listed by order of importance).

1. Research to understand the root causes of environmental trends in the Lake Champlain Basin, including in-lake trends and tributary loading trends.
2. Research to increase understanding of groundwater transport of nutrients and contaminants in the Lake Champlain Basin through monitoring and modeling efforts.
3. Research to develop innovative watershed or in-lake management approaches likely to improve water quality, including engineering solutions, socio-economic studies, and/or cost-benefit analyses for proposed approaches.
4. Research to develop new and innovative aquatic invasive species (AIS) spread prevention programs and control technologies capable of addressing real and potential AIS impacts, including sea lamprey, to the Lake Champlain ecosystem and fishery, human health, and the regional economy.
5. Research to improve understanding of AIS impacts to Lake Champlain's ecosystem and economy under climate change predictions.

III. Eligibility

Eligible organizations include colleges, universities, nonprofit organizations, for-profit companies, and municipalities in the U.S. and Canada. State, provincial, and federal government entities are not eligible to apply. Successful applicants will be responsible for the completion of all project tasks, though subcontracted work may be permitted by the LCBP Project Officer upon written request. All work must be geographically focused within the Lake Champlain Basin. Applicants may submit more than one pre-proposal, and more than one grant may be awarded to a single applicant.

IV. Timeframe for projects

The successful applicants will complete the project according to the following schedule. Please note that this schedule is subject to change.

Pre-proposals due to LCBP	By 12pm (noon) EST on November 11, 2022
Subset of applicants invited to submit full proposals	December 2022
Full proposals due to LCBP	February 2022 (date TBD – approx. seven weeks after notice)
Applicants notified of funding decisions	June 2023
Detailed project workplan due	August 2023
Project start date	January 2024
Project deliverables and final report due	Up to 3 years after start date

V. Summary of other requirements for selected projects

Upon selection of full proposals for funding, successful applicants should be aware of these additional requirements for all LCBP-funded projects:

1. Applicants must submit a detailed project workplan that will be subject to the LCBP approval process before a contract will be issued. The workplan describes the project methods, tasks, timeline, outputs, and task-based budget. Selected contractors will be responsible for the completion of all project tasks. **Payments will only be made for fully completed tasks; please keep this in mind when developing your task-based budget.** If a project is selected for funding, LCBP staff will provide the grant recipient with workplan guidance. Visit the LCBP website for more information on the LCBP grant process and required templates [at this link](#).
2. Quality Assurance Project Plans (QAPPs) are required for all activities involving the collection, generation, compilation, management, analysis, evaluation, and/or use of environmental data. This includes the collection of new data and the use of existing data. When necessary, the successful applicant will prepare a QAPP as part of the project workplan. It is possible that some grants might not require a QAPP. Please contact LCBP staff if you are unsure about the QAPP requirement. The QAPP must be fully approved before any environmental data collection or analysis activities can begin on a project. For projects requiring a QAPP, NEIWPC/LCBP will not pay for any data collection or analysis activities started prior to development and receipt of a fully approved QAPP. QAPP development typically requires 20-30 hours of staff time, and the complete process may take as long as 12 weeks, from initial development to final approval, so please make sure that an appropriate amount of time has been allocated to this step in the application's budget and timeline. If you plan to use professional services/a consultant to assist with QAPP development, they should be hired before the QAPP is started. More

information about the LCBP QAPP process can be found [at this link](#).

3. Successful applicants will prepare and submit brief quarterly reports documenting progress on each objective and task in the project (see below Proposal Format Requirements). A final report fully documenting the project outputs/results will be required at project completion.
4. When approved, the final report will be edited for content and style in consultation with the successful applicant. For larger projects, final reports may be published as part of the Lake Champlain Basin Program's Technical Report Series [at this link](#). Some content of this report may also be used for future LCBP and/or NEIWPCCC public outreach materials.
5. All materials and work products, regardless of physical form or characteristics, produced by all LCBP projects shall be made available to LCBP, NEIWPCCC, and EPA or the Great Lakes Fishery Commission (GLFC) in a suitable file format. LCBP, NEIWPCCC, and EPA or GLFC 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 NEIWPCCC, and subject to any other approvals required by state or federal law. Reports and other deliverables will credit LCBP, NEIWPCCC, and EPA or the GLFC as funding partners for any work completed under the project contract.
6. GIS data produced under this project must adhere to the requirements of EPA's National Geospatial Data Policy (see <https://www.epa.gov/geospatial/epa-national-geospatial-data-policy>). Specifically, the selected contractor must provide documentation for all produced data, including source information for each digital data layer (i.e., scale and accuracy, map projection, coordinate system, etc.), and specific information about the data layer itself (i.e., method used, geographic extent of data layer, file format, date of creation, staff contact, description and definition of data fields and their contents, related files, if any, and description of data quality and quality assurance methods used). The EPA Metadata Editor (EME) was developed to simplify and standardize metadata development and is a recommended tool for streamlining production of required metadata. The EME and related training materials can be downloaded from <https://edg.epa.gov/EME/>. Specific technical guidance on geospatial deliverables and acceptable formats can be found at <https://www.epa.gov/geospatial/epa-region-2-gis-deliverables-guidance>. GIS data produced under this project will be submitted to LCBP as a deliverable.
7. NEIWPCCC requires its contractors to maintain workers compensation and liability insurance. Contractors must submit proof of adequate insurance coverage on an annual basis for the duration of the project. The Contractor shall, at its sole expense, obtain and

maintain in force, and shall require any subcontractor or assignee to obtain and maintain in force, both for the benefit of NEIWPCCC, the following kinds and amounts of insurance:

- Workers' Compensation Insurance. The policy shall cover the obligations of the Contractor in accordance with the Workers' Compensations Law and Disability Benefits Law covering all operations under the Contract, whether performed by it, or by its subcontractor.
- Liability and Property Damage Insurance. Unless otherwise specified, each policy shall have limits not less than: \$2,000,000 combined (Bodily Injury & Property Damage); \$3,000,000 aggregate, single limit per occurrence.

8. Subawardees must comply with all requirements and responsibilities of this subaward and with all U.S. EPA General Terms and Conditions under the prime agreement as outlined [at this website](#). Subawardees are required to submit a [Subrecipient Risk Assessment Form](#) with their proposal, which includes a requirement to attach an audit in some cases. If a Subawardee fails to submit or complete this form their proposal may be eliminated from consideration.

9. NEIWPCCC COVID-19 Vaccination Policy

NEIWPCCC is committed to providing a working environment that keeps all staff as safe as possible and promotes the well-being of our community. All RFP applicants who may come into close contact with NEIWPCCC staff are required to be [fully vaccinated](#). Close contact may occur during a project with a Quality Assurance Project Plan (via a QAPP audit), during project planning meetings, during project implementation, or other occasions. While some of these may occur virtually, please note that NEIWPCCC reserves the right to audit a project at any time. Applicants must be prepared to show proof of vaccination prior to any close contact with NEIWPCCC staff. Accepted proof of vaccination includes the original vaccination card, a printed copy of the vaccination card, or a digital photograph of the vaccination card. To protect confidential information, NEIWPCCC will not maintain copies of these documents, and any records provided will be discarded.

In addition, NEIWPCCC is committed to providing events that keep all participants as safe as possible and promote the well-being of our community. NEIWPCCC requires all individuals who participate in NEIWPCCC-funded events to be fully vaccinated in order to attend. Any events hosted with funding from NEIWPCCC must follow this pandemic policy.

This policy also applies to the contractor's subcontractors. All contractors applying for new work (or amending existing agreements) must be vaccinated. Go to <https://neiwpc.org/about-us/working-with-neiwpc/contractor-guidance/> for more information.

10. **UEI Number:** The official entity identifier for doing business with the U.S. Government and NEIWPCCC has changed from a DUNS number to a SAM.gov created Unique Entity Identifier ("UEI") number. The DUNS number is no longer acceptable. Instead, Contractors must register for a UEI through the System for Award Management (SAM) at

<https://www.sam.gov/portal/SAM>. This SAM-generated number is required for all NEIWPC Contractors as part of the agreement process. Existing NEIWPC Contractors that have already registered in SAM.gov will be automatically assigned a UEI which will be displayed in SAM.gov. No further action is required.

VI. Pre-proposal evaluation and selection criteria

Submitted pre-proposals will be judged according to the following criteria:

1. **Impact:** Potential to advance goals of *Opportunities for Action*, the mission of LCBP, and LCBP's mission for diversity, equity, and inclusion (see the [LCBP Mission webpage](#) for more information) (up to 20 points).
2. **Technical feasibility:** Extent to which the project can be executed, and the appropriateness of the methods (up to 10 points).
3. **Budget:** Efficiency of proposed request and budget for the scope and outputs of the project. Proposed funding match (if any) will increase score in this criterion (up to 10 points).
4. **Likelihood of success:** Assessment of risk versus benefit for the project (up to 10 points).
5. Extent to which the project team has **successfully completed LCBP projects in the past** with high quality outputs delivered on time with planned schedules and within planned budgets (up to 10 points). New applicants and those with a record of success with delivering high quality outputs on time and within budgets for LCBP projects will receive a full score (10 points) in this category.
6. **Prior performance of project team:** Extent to which the project team has successfully completed LCBP projects in the past with high quality outputs delivered on time with planned schedules and within planned budgets. New applicants and those with a record of success with delivering high quality outputs on time and within budgets for LCBP projects will receive a full score (up to 10 points) in this category.
7. Additional points will be given to projects that address at least one **research priority** listed in Section II (10 points if any priority is met).
8. Additional points will be given to research projects that address **climate change** in the Lake Champlain Basin, including its effects and potential adaptation measures (up to 10 points).

VII. Available funds and match requirements

This request for pre-proposals is in anticipation of LCBP fund appropriations for the U.S. Federal fiscal year beginning October 1, 2023. Funds are anticipated to be available for awarded projects to begin in early 2024. All awards are subject to available funding and LCBP is not obligated to issue any funds under this request.

Applicants may budget costs that are associated with the project as direct expenses, including personnel costs, travel, project supplies, meeting expenses, and subcontracts. Some allocation of project funds for indirect costs also is acceptable (see below). No in-kind or cash match is required, though match will be considered favorably during budget review and may make proposals more competitive.

VIII. Appropriate use of funds

- LCBP grant funds cannot be used to produce for-profit products or to cover costs associated with regulatory compliance or direct fundraising efforts. LCBP grant funds also cannot be used for endowment funds or legislative advocacy of any kind.
- Grant award funding may not be used for the purchase of food or beverage.
- Grant applicants are required to follow the small purchase method which is a relatively simple and informal method (procurement procedure) for purchasing supplies, equipment, and services that cost more than \$10,000 and less than \$250,000. This procurement procedure is applicable to proposals submitted in response to this RFP if the primary applicant is not a for-profit organization. The purpose is to ensure fair and open competition for purchases supported by LCBP/federal funding. If the applicant plans to use LCBP funding to obtain supplies, equipment, or contractual services to complete its proposed workplan, then it must follow federal procurement regulations:
 - Procurement of supplies and services that do not exceed \$10,000 may be made without soliciting competitive quotes if the price is considered reasonable.
 - Procurement of supplies, equipment and services that are greater than \$10,000 and do not cost more than \$250,000 require that the recipient obtain multiple price quotes through a documented competitive process. Good faith efforts to obtain services from disadvantaged business enterprises should also be made, including contacting the small business administration and minority business development agency to inform them about the opportunity for businesses to submit price quotes as part of the competitive process. At least three price quotes for professional services or subcontracted work must be secured. The selected item or service does not need to be the lowest cost if it does not meet your requirements or you can otherwise demonstrate that the higher price offers the “best value.” Justification must be provided for the outcome of the bid process. This process may take place prior to the submission of a proposal for LCBP funds.
 - “Equipment” is defined as tangible, non-expendable, personal property having a useful life of more than one year and an acquisition cost of \$5,000 or more per unit. Equipment purchases may require additional information at the time of purchase, an LCBP staff person taking inventory on an annual basis, and disposition instructions from funding source following the completion of the project.
- Build America, Buy America requirements (does not apply to Quebec-based projects):
 - When applicable, projects will be required to comply with EPA's implementation guidance on Build America, Buy America (BABA). This guidance is not yet available; however, LCBP anticipates these requirements will cover projects related to the construction, alteration, maintenance, or repair of infrastructure in the U.S. LCBP will provide additional information as it becomes available.
- Direct and Indirect Costs:
 - Applicants should budget costs that are associated with the project as direct expenses, including personnel costs, travel, project supplies (mailings, phone costs, office supplies) etc. Necessary indirect costs that are not directly attributable to funded activities are subject to the following policy:
 - Applicants that do not have a Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA) may charge a maximum indirect rate of 10 percent of direct costs (de minimis rate)
 - Applicants (including academic institutions) with a valid NICRA with their cognizant federal agency can charge indirect costs to projects based on their negotiated indirect cost rate and must enclose a current copy with their proposed work plan.
 - A valid NICRA is one in which the effective period has not expired. Applicants must provide a copy of their valid NICRA with their application for indirect cost reimbursement to be considered. If the effective period of the NICRA has expired but the grantee has

documented evidence (via an indirect cost rate proposal) that they have reapplied for a new rate, the expired rate may be accepted.

IX. Period of performance

Work is expected to begin no earlier than **January 2024** and, in most cases, should be completed within 3 years after the start date. Funding may be available for longer-term projects if justified for project outputs and outcomes.

X. Schedule and requirements for pre-proposal submission

1. Please follow the format outlined in the attached pre-proposal format requirements.
2. Only Microsoft Word-compatible submissions will be accepted and must be submitted no later than 12pm (noon) EST on **November 11, 2022** via the **online form [at this link](#)**. You should receive a confirmation email once your pre-proposal is successfully submitted (please check your spam folder). If submitting multiple proposals in response to this request, please complete a separate submission for each proposal.

Contact information

Please direct all inquiries to:

Dr. Matthew Vaughan

LCBP Chief Scientist

mvaughan@lcbp.org

Pre-proposal format requirements

Pre-proposals should adhere to the following format and should not exceed a **2-page maximum length** (font size 12). Additional pages may be used for a list of cited references and letters of support only.

TITLE: Please include a concise and descriptive title.

ONE SENTENCE ABSTRACT: This very brief description of your project should be understandable to a general audience.

POINT OF CONTACT: Name, position, organization, address, telephone, email of the person who will be the point of contact, and summary of project team qualifications. The listed organization should be the group that will ultimately enter into a contractual agreement with NEIWPC if the project is successful (see eligibility requirements in Section III above).

DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT SCOPE, OUTPUTS, OUTCOMES, METHODS, AND

TIMEFRAME: Use this space as you see fit to briefly describe your research project and explain how it will contribute toward LCBP's mission and goals outlined in *Opportunities for Action*.

Please note the following definitions: An **output** is an activity or product generated as a result of a task, e.g., treatment of six acres of run-off area, holding four public meetings, or generating an educational document. An **outcome** is a result or effect of all activities, e.g., reduced phosphorus loading to Lake Champlain through the Winooski River, or the public is better informed on aquatic invasive species. Please also list any anticipated partnerships. Letters of support and for landowner permission may be provided with the pre-proposal or later at the full proposal stage.

TOTAL REQUEST AMOUNT: List in U.S. dollars. Other anticipated sources and amounts of funding may also be included. Please note that if your pre-proposal is selected for a full proposal, the total funding request in the full proposal cannot be greater than the total request in the pre-proposal without written permission from LCBP.

BRIEF BUDGET EXPLANATION: Briefly explain the major components of the budget. List the percentage of the budget that may be spent on the following elements: field work, modeling, analysis, reporting, indirect costs, and any other major category (specify). More details and full budget explanation will be required at the full proposal stage. Relative percentages of budget components may change in the full proposal as necessary.

TECHNICAL REFERENCES CITED: List all technical references used for the pre-proposal (not included in the 2-page maximum total for the pre-proposal).