



Release date: September 28, 2023

## Patrick Leahy Lake Champlain Basin Program Announcement

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

The Patrick Leahy Lake Champlain Basin Program (LCBP), in coordination with the New England Interstate Water Pollution Control Commission (NEIW PCC), 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 is a very brief application to introduce a research project. Application questions and character limits are included below, which total roughly two pages of text. 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 2025 (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. For this funding year, the Lake Champlain Steering Committee has identified research tracks that will be considered for funding, listed below. Project proposals will compete with proposals from within the same research track. Research tracks are not listed in order of importance or priority.

#### **Track 1: General *Opportunities for Action***

- Research projects that address any research-oriented strategies and tasks outlined in *Opportunities for Action* and do not fall within the aims of other tracks listed below.

#### **Track 2: Nutrients**

- Research to estimate discharge and calculate nutrient loads from direct drainages to the Northeast Arm of Lake Champlain, and other direct drainage Lake Champlain basins that are under-characterized by the Lake Champlain Long-term Monitoring Program.
- Research focused on wetlands located outside of floodplain areas to determine phosphorus retention and develop a tool to estimate conservation and/or restoration benefits.

#### **Track 3: Public access**

- Research to identify geographic areas, methods, and/or programs that would expand public access and remove barriers to enjoyment of Lake Champlain, its tributaries, and water recreation opportunities with a focus on communities with disadvantages.

**Track 4: Flood resilience**

- Research to evaluate and recommend updates to design and siting standards to maximize the flood resilience and longevity of clean water project benefits.
- Research to quantify the flood resilience co-benefits of clean water projects.

**Track 5: Cyanobacteria**

- Research to develop protocols for monitoring benthic cyanobacteria species and determining the risk of cyanotoxins from benthic cyanobacteria blooms.

**Track 6: Biodiversity and native species conservation**

- Research to support the conservation and/or restoration of native species and their habitats.

We anticipate these projects will be supported with Federal Fiscal Year 2024 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 pre-proposals via the Foundant online application system no later than 12pm (noon) EST on November 10, 2023.**

**Late or incomplete pre-proposals will not be considered.**

**New proposal submission platform**

The Lake Champlain Basin Program is now using [Foundant](#), a web-based grant management software platform, to accept responses to Requests for Proposals, to manage the proposal review and award decision process, and to manage awarded projects to conclusion with award recipients.

New applicants must create an account to log in to the Foundant system. Each user will create their own account, and the system allows for multiple user accounts per organization. When creating an account, Foundant will also ask for information about the organization. Once this information is collected and the account is created, the user may identify the applicable grant category and begin the proposal submission process. They may also invite partners and colleagues to assist with the application within Foundant.

**Proposals must be submitted to Foundant; email submissions will not be accepted.**

Please visit the Foundant [Applicant Tutorial webpage](#) for assistance in creating your individual account, or contact Kerry Crowningshield, LCBP Office Manager, at [kcrowningshield@lcbp.org](mailto:kcrowningshield@lcbp.org) or call 802-372-3213.

**Inquiries**

Please direct all request for pre-proposal inquiries to:  
Dr. Matthew Vaughan, LCBP Chief Scientist  
Email: [mvaughan@lcbp.org](mailto:mvaughan@lcbp.org)

## Lake Champlain Basin Program

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

#### Overview of Lake Champlain Basin Program and NEIWPC

The Lake Champlain Special Designation Act of 1990 designated the Lake Champlain Basin as a special project area under the Agricultural Conservation Program and established the Lake Champlain Management Conference to publish a pollution prevention, control, and restoration plan for Lake Champlain. Following EPA's approval of the plan, entitled *Opportunities for Action: An Evolving Plan for the Future of the Lake Champlain Basin* ("the Plan"), the Daniel Patrick Moynihan Lake Champlain Basin Program Act of 2002 established the Lake Champlain Basin Program and authorized EPA to provide support to New York, Vermont, and NEIWPC for implementation of the Plan. The Act was reauthorized in 2022, formally renaming the LCBP to the Patrick Leahy Lake Champlain Basin Program and authorizing the Program through 2027.

In accordance with the Act, 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 Opportunities for Action ([plan.lcbp.org](http://plan.lcbp.org)).

NEIWPC was established by an act of the United States Congress which ratified the New England Interstate Water Pollution Control Compact in 1947. NEIWPC is a regional commission that helps the states of the Northeast preserve and advance water quality. NEIWPC has served as the primary program administrator of LCBP at the request of the EPA since 1992 and administers the program's personnel, finances, and contracts. NEIWPC is a program partner of the LCBP.

#### 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 2025. 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](mailto:mvaughan@lcbp.org)) with any questions.

## II. Priorities for 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. For this funding year, the Lake Champlain Steering Committee has identified research tracks that will be considered for funding, listed below. Project proposals will compete with proposals from within the same research track. Research tracks are not listed in order of importance or priority.

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### **Track 6: Biodiversity and native species conservation**

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## 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.

Individuals and representatives from organizations that participated in the development or review of this RFP and its contents are not eligible to apply.

#### 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 10, 2023
Subset of applicants invited to submit full proposals	December 2023
Full proposals due to LCBP	February 2023 (date TBD – approx. seven weeks after notice)
Applicants notified of funding decisions	June 2024
Detailed project workplan due	August 2024
Project start date	January 2025*
Project deliverables and final report due	Up to 3 years after start date

\*Please note that work may not begin on the funded tasks of the project until a signed, executed agreement is in place with NEIWPCCC.

#### 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:

- Quality Assurance Project Plans (QAPPs).** QAPPs are required for all activities involving the collection, generation, compilation, management, analysis, evaluation, and/or use of environmental 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, NEIWPCCC/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](#).
- Work Product Accessibility.** All materials and work products, regardless of physical form or characteristics, produced as a result of this project shall be made available to LCBP, NEIWPCCC, and EPA or the Great Lakes Fishery Commission (GLFC) in a

suitable file format. LCBP, NEIWPC, 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 NEIWPC, and subject to any other approvals required by state or federal law. Reports and other deliverables will credit LCBP, NEIWPC, and EPA or the GLFC as funding partners for any work completed under the project contract.

- **Geospatial Data.** 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](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.
- **Worker’s Compensation and Liability Insurance.** NEIWPC requires its contractors to maintain worker’s 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 NEIWPC, 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.
- **Subaward Requirements.** 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.
- **UEI Number.** The official entity identifier for doing business with the U.S. Government and NEIWPC 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://sam.gov/content/home>. This SAM-generated number is required for all NEIWPCCC Contractors as part of the agreement process. Existing NEIWPCCC 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.

- **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.** The Lake Champlain Basin Program is committed to advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion across our work. Proposals demonstrating benefits to communities with disadvantages will be given additional weight during the proposal evaluation process. Please review [LCBP's communities with disadvantages definition and guidance](#) for more information. Questions relating to LCBP's definition, or this portion of the proposal evaluation process can be directed to Mae Kate Campbell, Associate Scientist ([mkcampbell@lcbp.org](mailto:mkcampbell@lcbp.org)).
- **Workplan.** Successful applicants must submit a detailed project workplan to LCBP within thirty days of LCBP grant award notification. This workplan 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. If a project is selected for funding, LCBP staff will provide the grant recipient with workplan guidance. We strongly encourage all applicants to use the LCBP grant reporting templates and to visit the LCBP website for more information on the LCBP grant process and reporting templates at this link.
- **Quarterly Reporting:** Successful applicants will prepare and submit brief quarterly reports 10 days after the end of each calendar quarter (by April 10 for January-March, by July 10 for April-June, by October 10 for July-September, and by January 10 for October-December). Quarterly reports will document progress on each task.
- **Final report:** A final report fully documenting the project outputs and results is required at project completion. Required templates for this reporting can be found on the [LCBP Grantee Toolkit](#) page. Final reports may be published as part of the [LCBP Technical Report series](#). The final report may also be used for LCBP and/or NEIWPCCC education and outreach materials.
- **NEIWPCCC COVID-19 Vaccination Policy.** NEIWPCCC is committed to providing a working environment that keeps all staff and visitors as safe as possible and promotes the well-being of our community. We encourage attendees to take CDC recommendations and their individual circumstances into account when making a decision about preventative actions. It is recommended that all individuals who participate in NEIWPCCC-funded events be fully vaccinated, however this is no longer a requirement.

## VI. Pre-proposal evaluation and selection criteria

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

1. **Impact:** Extent to which project outputs will:
  - a. (20 points) Advance the goals of *Opportunities for Action* and the mission of LCBP;



- b. (10 points) Result in benefits to communities with disadvantages per LCBP's definition. Projects that benefit a community with disadvantages that meet multiple criteria included in LCBP's definition and demonstrate meaningful involvement from the selected community will receive 10 points for this criterion. Projects that benefit a community meeting only one criterion or do not demonstrate meaningful involvement with communities with disadvantages will receive between 2.5-7.5 points proportional to the degree of benefit or engagement with the identified communities. Additional information on LCBP's communities with disadvantages definition is provided in section V.
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. **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.
6. **Climate change:** 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, 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 is also 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

- **Funding.** Partial funding of total application requests may be awarded if agreeable to the applicant. LCBP anticipates granting multiple awards from this RFP. All awards are subject to funding availability.
- **Matching Funds.** No in-kind or cash match is required, though match will be considered favorably during budget review and may make proposals more competitive.
- **Non-Permissible Grant Funding Uses.** LCBP grant funds cannot be used:
  - o to produce for-profit products or to cover costs associated with regulatory



- compliance or direct fundraising efforts
  - o for endowment funds or legislative advocacy of any kind
  - o for the purchase of food or beverage.
- **Procurement Requirements.** 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:
  - o Procurement of supplies and services that do not exceed \$10,000 may be made without soliciting competitive quotes if the price is considered reasonable.
  - o 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.
  - o “Equipment” is defined as tangible, non-expendable, personal property having a useful life of more than one year and an acquisition cost of \$50,000 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** (not applicable to Quebec-based projects). Subawards or contracts awarded more than \$250,000 are subject to the Build America Buy America Act. (BABA) requirements. Under the BABA Act. No funds made available by Federal financial assistance programs for infrastructure shall be obligated to a project unless all of the iron, steel, manufactured products, and construction materials used in the project are produced in the United States.” (Build America, Buy America Act), P.L. 117-58, Secs 70911 - 70917.

- **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 2025** 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. New proposal submission platform**

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New applicants must create an account to log in to the Foundant system. Each user will create their own account, and the system allows for multiple user accounts per organization. When creating an account, Foundant will also ask for information about the organization. Once the user account is created, the applicant's account will automatically be connected to other accounts from the same organization using the Federal Tax ID (EIN) number. Once this information is collected and the account is created, the user may identify the applicable grant category and begin the proposal submission process. They may also invite partners to assist with the application within Foundant. Proposal questions and format requirements for this request for proposals are provided below for reference and to help applicants prepare their proposals.

**Proposals must be submitted to Foundant at [this link](#). Email submissions will not be accepted.**

Please visit the Foundant [Applicant Tutorial webpage](#) for assistance in creating your individual account, or contact Kerry Crowningshield, LCBP Office Manager, at [kcrowningshield@lcbp.org](mailto:kcrowningshield@lcbp.org) or call 802-372-3213.

**Pre-proposal questions to be entered via Foundant application:**

**Title** (100 character limit). Please include a concise and descriptive title.

**Research track** (drop down selection from options listed above). Please identify the track to which this pre-proposal applies.

**One-sentence abstract** (250 character limit). This very brief description of your project should be understandable to a general audience.

**Point of contact name** (65 character limit).

**Point of contact email** (65 character limit).

**Point of contact phone** (65 character limit).

**Summary of research team qualifications** (500 character limit).

**Description of project background, motivation, scope, and applicability to *Opportunities for Action*** (3,000 character limit). 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 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.

**Project outputs and outcomes** (750 characters). 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.

**Project methods** (1500 characters). Please briefly describe the project methods that will be used in your research project so they can be understood by a general scientific audience.

**Project timeframe** (200 characters). Please describe the anticipated project schedule, including the completion of major outputs and project completion.

**Diversity, equity, and inclusion** (1,000 character limit). Describe, if applicable, any benefits for or engagement with communities with disadvantages that your project will include, drawing on LCBP's [definition](#) and accompanying [mapping tool](#) as needed.

**Image(s)**. Attach up to three images that could be used to represent the proposed research project to a general scientific audience.

**Total request amount** (200 character limit). 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** (350 characters): 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 a 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** (no character limit): List all technical references used for the pre-proposal.