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Lake Champlain Basin Program Announcement

Request for Proposals

Lake Champlain Watershed Economic Assessment: The Value of our Clean Water and Healthy Ecosystems

The Lake Champlain Basin Program (LCBP), in coordination with NEIWPC, is pleased to announce a Request for Proposals (RFP) for services to perform an economic assessment of major watershed-related uses, economic sectors, and economic impacts of these sectors to the Lake Champlain basin. The purpose of this project is to measure and communicate the economic value that Lake Champlain and the clean water and healthy ecosystems of its watershed provides to the regional economy. The results of this project will provide a credible economic analysis and public facing outreach materials. The results of this valuation will be used in reports and publications by the Lake Champlain Basin Program and partners including the US EPA. This comprehensive, multisectoral study will update and expand previous economic studies in the region. This study may lead to additional work in this sector.

Eligible organizations include colleges, universities, nonprofit organizations, for-profit companies, and non-federal/non-state government agencies.

Up to approximately \$200,000 is available to support the awarded project. The LCBP anticipates offering one (1) award for this RFP.

This project will support the goal of building community-level appreciation and understanding for the Lake Champlain Basin's rich natural and cultural resources, and for these communities to develop the capacity to implement actions that will result in sound stewardship of these resources while maintaining strong local economies, as outlined in the Thriving Communities Chapter of the LCBP's long-term management plan: [Opportunities for Action: An Evolving Plan for the Future of the Lake Champlain Basin](#). This RFP is supported by US EPA funds provided to NEIWPC in partnership with LCBP.

Applicants must submit proposals via the online form at [this link](#) no later than 12pm (noon) on Monday May 8, 2023.

Please see below for complete details and proposal format requirements. All awards are subject to funding availability. This Request for Proposals is available on the LCBP website at lcbp.org/grants.

I. Overview of the Lake Champlain Basin Program

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 EPA under the Clean Water 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 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.

II. Project Background

The regional economy surrounding the Lake Champlain Basin (including parts of Vermont, New York and Quebec) is highly dependent on its natural capital (i.e. the availability of clean, safe water resources for many uses, including drinking water, swimming, boating, fishing, tourism, agriculture, and industrial and municipal uses). As conversations continue among legislators, public stakeholders, and resource managers about the direction and needs for prioritizing restoration and protection of Lake Champlain and its watershed, a common and emerging interest is the need for a better understanding of the economic value of clean water and healthy ecosystems to the region. The 1993 [Lake Champlain Economic Database Project](#) was the last comprehensive analysis of Lake-related economic sectors. This project seeks to update this 1993 analysis using the framework of the four goals presented in *Opportunities for Action*: clean water, healthy ecosystems, thriving communities, and an informed and involved public.

LCBP envisions this project will be structured similarly to the [Narragansett Bay Watershed Economy Report](#) and synthesize existing data to provide an overview of the key sectors offering considerable economic benefit to the regional economy and that rely on the clean water and healthy ecosystems of the Lake Champlain watershed. This project will effectively convey the economic importance of clean and safe water resources and healthy ecosystems to residents, municipalities, and legislators across the bi-state, bi-national Lake Champlain Basin and will be supported by an advisory committee made up of pertinent experts.

III. Project Tasks and Deliverables

LCBP seeks services to perform a market economic assessment of major basin-related uses, economic sectors, and economic impacts of these sectors to the Lake Champlain basin. The

successful applicant will then develop a plan and materials to communicate the market economic value that Lake Champlain and its watershed provides to the regional economy. The results of this project will provide a credible economic analysis and corresponding public-facing outreach materials. The project results will be used in reports and publications by the Lake Champlain Basin Program and program partners including the US EPA. This comprehensive, multisectoral study will update and expand previous economic studies in the region.

Priority economic sectors to consider in the proposed scope of work include tourism (including recreation, beach use, state park use, recreational boating, and fishing), cultural heritage, agriculture, forestry, hunting and fishing, property values, manufacturing, research, education, aquaculture, commercial fishing, drinking water and wastewater infrastructure, canals, marinas, and employment in the lake or watershed resource management sector. A subset of these sectors may be selected for this project, with priority given to those most closely related to the clean water and healthy ecosystems goals.

Anticipated tasks and deliverables include the following components:

1. Identification and parameterization of appropriate methodologies and anticipated data sources for priority sectors in Vermont, New York, and Quebec to accomplish the goals outlined in this RFP in consultation with the project's advisory committee, convened by LCBP.
2. Quality Assurance Project Plan (see Section IV below)
3. Completion of data collection and analysis, following approved methodologies. Data generated for this project should provide an overview of the historical, current, and future outlooks of prioritized natural capital-dependent sectors in the Basin.
4. Completion of a final report in consultation with the project's advisory committee that:
 - Provides a measure of the market economic value of selected natural capital-dependent sectors of the Lake Champlain watershed.
 - For each sector included, provides evidence on the connections to clean water and healthy ecosystems of Lake Champlain and its watershed and provides information on the scale of those connections using appropriate economic methods.
 - Contains stand-alone materials, such as fact sheets, infographics, StoryMaps, etc., that can be circulated to resource managers and the public in both electronic and hardcopy mediums that clearly articulate the outcomes of the project and convey the value Lake Champlain and the clean water and healthy ecosystems of its watershed provides to the regional economy. Results may include monetized (e.g. revenue from angling) and non-monetized endpoints (e.g. beach visits) where appropriate and compelling.
 - Is presented in the form of a website or can transfer easily into web-format, including the necessary high-resolution graphics and summary presentations by sector.
 - Provides the input datasets, process and computer code to reproduce the reported results.

IV. Summary of Other Requirements for the Selected Proposal

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

1. Within thirty days of LCBP grant award notification, applicants must submit a detailed project workplan that will be subject to the LCBP approval process before a contractual agreement will be issued. The workplan describes the project methods, tasks, timeline, outputs, and task-based budget. **Payments will only be made for fully completed tasks.** Payments for partially completed tasks will not be processed. If a project is selected for funding, LCBP staff will provide the grant recipient with workplan guidance. We strongly encourage all applicants to visit the LCBP website for more information on the LCBP grant process and reporting templates: <http://www.lcbp.org/about-us/grants-rfps/grant-toolkit/>.
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. 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. The QAPP development and approval process can be quite lengthy (up to 90 days, depending on the size of the project), so please make sure that an appropriate amount of time has been allocated to this step in the project budget and timeline. More information about the LCBP QAPP process can be found at this link: <http://www.lcbp.org/about-us/grants-rfps/grant-toolkit/qapp/>.
3. The successful applicant will prepare and submit 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 results will be required at project completion. When approved, the final report may 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 (subject to change):

Proposals Due to LCBP	May 8, 2023, at 12pm (noon) EST
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Applicants Notified of Funding Decisions	July 2023
Detailed Project Workplan Due	September 2023
Project Start Date	November 2023
Project Deliverables and Final Report Due	July 2025

5. All materials and work products, regardless of physical form or characteristics, produced as a result of this project shall be made available to LCBP, NEIWPC, 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.

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. NEIWPC 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 the Commission, the following kinds and amounts of insurance:

- o 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.
 - o 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 <https://www.epa.gov/grants/grant-terms-and-conditions>. Subawardees are required to submit a Subrecipient Risk Assessment Form with their proposal ([see LCBP Grant Toolkit](#)). This form 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. NEIWPC COVID-19 VACCINATION POLICY

NEIWPC 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 NEIWPC 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 NEIWPC 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 NEIWPC 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, NEIWPC will not maintain copies of these documents, and any records provided will be discarded.

In addition, NEIWPC is committed to providing events that keep all participants as safe as possible and promote the well-being of our community. NEIWPC requires all individuals who participate in NEIWPC-funded events to be fully vaccinated in order to attend. Any events hosted with funding from NEIWPC 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. Employment tracking (does not factor into application scoring or competitiveness):

- a. If applicable, provide an estimate of the number of people and audience type that will be actively or passively engaged in the products of this grant, if awarded.
- b. Provide an estimate of the percentage (to nearest tenth) of new full-time employee positions that will be created if this grant is awarded, and the percentage of existing full-time employee positions that will be supported if this grant is awarded.

Additional reporting criteria may be provided to the successful applicant upon award notification.

V. Eligibility

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

VI. Proposal Evaluation and Selection Criteria

Proposals will be judged according to the following criteria:

1. Demonstrated knowledge of economic sector and impact analysis methods connected to ecosystem services concepts (30 points).
2. Technical merit and feasibility of the proposed methods for connecting economic sectors' current status to clean water and healthy ecosystem related ecosystem services (40 points).
3. Plan for the creation of public-facing, web-friendly outreach materials to communicate the findings of the study to legislators, public-stakeholders, and resource managers. The creation of outreach materials may be completed in-house (demonstrate experience and qualifications) or subcontracted. (20 points).
4. Appropriateness of budget and budget justification, describing how the funds awarded will be used to produce the set of deliverables described in Section II, above (10 points).

VII. Available Funds and Match Requirements

A total of not more than \$200,000 is available for this project. Proposals with budgets that exceed the maximum amount identified for this opportunity 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. 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. LCBP anticipates granting one (1) award from this RFP.

VIII. Appropriate Use of Funds

- 1) LCBP grant funds **cannot be used** to produce for-profit products or to cover costs associated with regulatory compliance or direct fundraising efforts. These LCBP grant funds also cannot be used for land purchases, endowment funds, or lobbying or legislative advocacy of any kind.
- 2) 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.

- 3) Grant award funding may not be used for the purchase of food or beverage.

IX. Direct and Indirect Costs:

Applicants should budget costs that are associated with the project as direct expenses, including infrastructure and equipment purchases, 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 in order 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.
- The LCBP/NEIWPC Indirect Policy can be found here: <http://www.lcbp.org/about-us/grants-rfps/grant-toolkit/>.

IX. Notification of Awards

Award notification to applicants is expected by July 2023. The award recipient may be asked to submit a workplan, timeline, and budget at this time. Project work cannot begin until a contract is signed by both parties. LCBP and NEIWPC 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.

X. Period of Performance

Work is expected to begin in **November 2023** and is to be completed no later than **July 2025**.

XI. Schedule and Requirements for Proposal Submission

1. Please follow the format outlined in the below Proposal Format Requirements.
2. Word-compatible electronic submissions ONLY will be accepted and must be received no later than 12pm (EST) on May 8, 2023. To apply, follow the instructions via the submission portal at [this link](#). You should receive a confirmation email once your proposal is successfully submitted (please check your spam folder).

XII. Contact Information

Direct all inquiries prior to submission date to:

Katie Darr
kdarr@lcbp.org
802.372.2019

XIII. Proposal format and content requirements

Proposals should utilize the proposal form below and not exceed the maximum 8- page length, **NOT** including budget information, bibliography of references cited, letters of support, or project team resumes.

Please use 12-point Times New Roman (or equivalent) font or larger, minimum 1-inch margin on all sides. Single-spaced text is acceptable.

Proposal format requirements

Proposals should adhere to the following format and should not exceed a 8-page maximum length (font size 12), NOT including budget information, references cited, and investigator resumes, and letters of participation or support.

TITLE: Concise and descriptive.

POINT OF CONTACT: Name, position, organization, address, county where the organization/business is located, 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 the contract.

TRACKING INFORMATION: Federal Tax Identification Number (EIN), UEI (SAM.gov) Number, and Certified Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE): (Yes or No)

TOTAL REQUEST AMOUNT: Total proposal request amount in US dollars.

NON-FEDERAL MATCH AMOUNT: Total proposed non-federal match amount. While matching funds are not required, they make projects more competitive.

ABSTRACT: Brief description of proposed work.

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

TASKS: Describe in detail the tasks that will be performed, including methods and approaches.

DELIVERABLES AND OUTPUTS: Detailed description of the items that will be sent to LCBP as documentation of work completed through the award, and the elements of the projects that are not delivered to LCBP, such as outreach efforts. Quarterly progress reports and a final report (including GIS data) are required deliverables.

OUTCOMES: Provide a description of the anticipated impact or change in condition (i.e. behavior or environment) that you are trying to achieve through this award. Outcomes may be short-term or long-term.

SCHEDULE: Timeline showing anticipated dates for completion of the major tasks and deliverables and outputs. 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.

DETAILED BUDGET JUSTIFICATION: Cost breakdown by major tasks and budget categories (e.g., personnel, equipment), linking costs to specific tasks/deliverables wherever possible. Breakdown should show costs to be covered by the LCBP award and other sources (if applicable), as well as any match amounts and totals.

Required budget table format:

Task number	Task title	Personnel	Fringe	Travel	Supplies	Prof. services	Indirect costs	Total budget
1		\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
2		\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
3		\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
4		\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
5		\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
All tasks		\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$

Non-federal match table format:

Personnel	\$
Fringe	\$
Volunteer time	\$
Travel	\$
Supplies	\$
Professional services	\$
Indirect	\$ -
Total match	\$

*See budget table template and calculator at the [Grantee Toolkit](#) website to estimate the value of volunteer time. While matching funds are not required, they make projects more competitive.

TECHNICAL REFERENCES CITED: List bibliography details for references used in the proposal. This section is not included in the page maximum total for the proposal.

CURRICULUM VITAE/RESUME OF PROJECT TEAM: You may include up to 3-5 references for prior work pertinent to the proposed project. Please limit to one page per team member. This section is not included in the page maximum total for the proposal.

LETTERS OF SUPPORT: You may attach partner and stakeholder letters of support to your proposal, which do not count toward the maximum page limit.