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Patrick Leahy Lake Champlain Basin Program Announcement

Request for Proposals for Land Conservation for Clean Water and Healthy Ecosystems in the Lake Champlain Basin

The Patrick Leahy Lake Champlain Basin Program (“LCBP”) and the New England Interstate Water Pollution Control Commission (“NEIW PCC”) are pleased to announce a Request for Proposals (RFP) for the acquisition of land or conservation easements on land located in the U.S. portion of the Lake Champlain Basin to further LCBP’s goals, as outlined in LCBP’s Management Plan entitled [*Opportunities for Action: An Evolving Plan for the Future of the Lake Champlain Basin*](#).

Awards from this competition will support projects resulting in the acquisition of fee simple interest or conservation easements with the primary goal of advancing Clean Water and Healthy Ecosystems in alignment with LCBP’s core goals. Priority will be given to projects that protect or improve water quality, enhance aquatic, riparian, or shoreline habitat for native species or provide flood resiliency. Opportunities to increase public access for recreation, along with other benefits consistent with LCBP goals, will be considered as co-benefits but should not be the primary purpose of projects supported through this program.

Eligible costs supported by this award include the purchase price of the fee simple interest or conservation easement to be held and conserved in perpetuity. Costs leading to the purchase of a fee simple interest or conservation easement also are eligible, including, but not limited to, the cost of title insurance, surveying and mapping expenses, appraisal costs, closing costs, including documentation and legal fees, the cost of developing conservation management plans, stewardship expenses, and staffing expenses to prepare a purchase or easement, including outreach to communities in support of the agreement. Projects that include acquisition of the identified parcel(s) or conservation easement(s) are likely to be more competitive.

Eligible organizations are entities authorized by the corresponding State law (New York or Vermont) to hold conservation easements or property titles within these jurisdictions. These

entities may include land trusts, not-for-profit organizations, or non-federal/non-state government entities.

Requests for funds solely to support stewardship costs associated with existing conserved lands will not be considered.

Up to \$4,000,000 is available to support awarded projects. Each applicant may request a minimum of \$100,000 up to a maximum of \$4,000,000 for an individual proposal. Multiple proposals will be accepted from a single organization in response to this RFP.

This grant opportunity is supported by funds awarded to NEIWPCC on behalf of the LCBP by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) under the [Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act](#).

Applicants must submit proposals via [Foundant](#) no later than 5:00 PM on November 12, 2025.

Please see below for complete details and proposal format requirements. LCBP expects to issue multiple awards from this RFP. All awards are subject to funding availability. This RFP is available on the LCBP website at lcbp.org/grants.

Request for Proposals for Land Conservation for Clean Water and Healthy Ecosystems in the Lake Champlain Basin

The Patrick Leahy Lake Champlain Basin Program (“LCBP”) and the New England Interstate Water Pollution Control Commission (“NEIWPCC”) are pleased to announce a Request for Proposals (RFP) for the acquisition of land or conservation easements on land located in the U.S. portion of the Lake Champlain Basin to further LCBP’s Clean Water, Healthy Ecosystems, Thriving Communities, or Informed and Involved Public Goals, as outlined in LCBP’s Management Plan, [*Opportunities for Action: An Evolving Plan for the Future of the Lake Champlain Basin*](#).

I. Inquiries and Grant Writing Resources

Please direct all inquiries to:

Dr. Matthew Vaughan, LCBP Chief Scientist

Email: mvaughan@lcbp.org

Phone: 800-468-5227 (Toll free in VT/NY) or 802-372-0216

Grant writing resources can be found on the LCBP Grantee Toolkit page:

<https://www.lcbp.org/about-us/grants-rfps/grant-toolkit/#grantwritingresources>

II. Overview of the Lake Champlain Basin Program and NEIWPCC

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 LCBP 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 NEIWPCC 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.

NEIWPCC was established by an act of the United States Congress which ratified the New England Interstate Water Pollution Control Compact in 1947. NEIWPCC is a regional commission that helps the states of the Northeast preserve and advance water quality. NEIWPCC engages and convenes water quality professionals and other interested parties from New England and New York to collaborate on drinking water, wastewater, and environmental science challenges across shared regions and ecosystems. NEIWPCC has served as the primary program administrator of LCBP at the request of the EPA and administers the program’s personnel, finances, and contracts.

In accordance with the Act, LCBP and NEIWPCC work in partnership with EPA, 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.

III. Details for this grant opportunity

Awards from this competition will support projects resulting in the acquisition of fee simple interest or conservation easements with the primary goal of advancing Clean Water and Healthy Ecosystems in alignment with LCBP's goals, as outlined in LCBP's Management Plan, [*Opportunities for Action: An Evolving Plan for the Future of the Lake Champlain Basin.*](#)

Priority will be given to projects that protect or improve water quality, enhance aquatic, riparian, or shoreline habitat for native species and/or provide flood resiliency. Opportunities to increase public access for recreation, along with other benefits consistent with LCBP goals, will be considered as a co-benefits but should not be the primary purpose of projects supported through this program.

Parcels acquired or conserved through the use of awarded funds must be held and conserved in perpetuity.

Proposals submitted in response to this RFP may address the activities associated with the acquisition of land or conservation easements, including the reasonable and necessary costs incurred in connection with developing a purchase or easement agreement. The eligible costs supported by this award include the purchase price of the fee simple interest or conservation easement, the cost of title insurance, surveying and mapping expenses, appraisal costs, closing costs, including documentation and legal fees, the cost of developing conservation management plans, stewardship expenses, reasonable and proportionally valued expenses associated with creating or improving public access on easements or purchases that will be supported by an award, and staffing expenses to prepare a purchase or easement agreement, including outreach to communities in support of the agreement.

This is a reimbursement-based program. Awarded applicants must first incur and document expenditures for eligible costs to receive reimbursement.

To the extent known, proposals should:

- Identify the parcel size and the portion of the parcels that will be subject to conservation;
- State the value of the land or conservation easement to be acquired;
- Describe the effect of the acquisition on neighboring properties;
- Describe the conservation benefits the acquisition or easement(s) will provide, including whether public access will be provided;
- Identify the restricted and permitted uses proposed for the property;
- Identify the duration of any conservation easement, identify the manner of assuring compliance with the covenants and restrictions proposed;
- Describe any future planned or proposed uses of the land;
- Describe any planned or proposed construction on and/or development of the land;
- Describe planned and/or potential water quality and habitat restoration opportunities; and
- Describe the long-term conservation stewardship plan for the parcel(s) and the applicant's experience providing long-term land stewardship.

Due to funding availability, projects awarded under this RFP will not be eligible for timeline extensions. Note the December 31, 2028, due date for all project deliverables (including final report) in the schedule below.

US EPA Required Deed/Easement Restriction: Per U.S. EPA requirement, awardees are required to include specific Notice of Grant Agreement language in the deed or easement language for land acquisition or conservation agreements that outlines restrictions on certain types of land management, development, or construction activities, and requirements on acceptable manners of resale or disposition of parcels purchased or conserved using EPA funding. The Notice of Grant template is available [at this link](#) for review.

IV. Eligibility

Eligible organizations include:

- (1) Municipalities of the States of New York and Vermont within the U.S. [boundaries of the Lake Champlain basin](#);
- (2) Organizations qualifying under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended, provided the stated purposes of the organization is to acquire property or rights and interests in property to preserve historic, agricultural, forestry, or open space resources;
- (3) Organizations qualifying under Section 501(c)(2) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended, provided that organization is controlled exclusively by a qualified organization under Section 501(c)(3);
- (4) Applying organizations or project partner(s) must have legal authority to hold such property in fee simple interest or conservation rights and interests under applicable state laws.

V. Available funding and match requirements

This grant opportunity is supported by funds awarded to NEIWPCC on behalf of the LCBP by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) from the [Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act](#). Up to \$4,000,000 is available to support awarded projects. Each applicant may request a minimum of \$100,000 up to a maximum of \$4,000,000 for an individual proposal. Multiple proposals will be accepted from a single organization in response to this RFP. There is no requirement to provide matching funds for this grant opportunity. However, applicants may propose to provide non-federal in-kind or cash matching funding which will be considered favorably and may make a proposal more competitive.

The Lake Champlain Steering Committee will ultimately determine the final distribution of available funds. Partial funding of total application requests may be awarded.

VI. Summary of other requirements for selected applicants

Award funding for reimbursement of eligible costs is contingent on the proponent's successful negotiation of a contract with NEIWPCC. This contingency should be clearly and accurately

reflected with respect to any provision of a Purchase and Sale Agreement governing the acquisition of either fee simple interest or a conservation easement. NEIWPCC's standard contract template is available [at this link](#). To expedite the contracting process, NEIWPCC expects applicants to review NEIWPCC's standard contract terms before submitting a proposal. NEIWPCC will add a negotiated scope of work or workplan and budget to the standard contract terms after the award decision. NEIWPCC generally does not negotiate the agreement or contract templates, except for the scope of work or work plan and task-based budget.

Selected applicants will be required to complete the following additional tasks:

- **Workplan:** 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 that will be supported with these grant funds, if awarded. As you develop the task-based budget, keep in mind that 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.

EPA requires all workplans to be certified by the Authorized Representative. The final workplan will not be approved for contracting unless the final workplan is certified. Please do not hesitate to contact your project officer for additional guidance regarding this new requirement.

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/>

- **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, NEIWPCC/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/aboutus/grants-rfps/grant-toolkit/qapp/>.
 - A “generic” QAPP is available for projects awarded through this opportunity, available for download [at this link](#). If data collection and analysis can be completed in accordance with this QAPP, then it is not necessary to develop a new QAPP.

- **Reporting:** The successful applicant will prepare and submit brief quarterly reports documenting progress on each objective and task in the project. A final report fully documenting the project results will be required at project completion. 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.
- **Reporting Metrics:** Effective after the release of the [2022 Opportunities for Action Lake Champlain Watershed Management Plan \(OFA\)](#), all LCBP-funded grants must provide standardized reporting metrics within the project workplan and final report. Reporting 9 metrics will be considered preliminary at the application and workplan stages and final at the final report stage of your grant. Reporting metrics will be based on the applicable OFA strategy(ies), grant category, and project type. Personnel time used for reporting metrics is an eligible grant expense. The most up-to-date version of this guidance can be found on the LCBP website: <http://www.lcbp.org/about-us/grants-rfps/grant-toolkit/>.
- **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 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.
- **Procurement of supplies, equipment, and services:** 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, equipment, 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 requires 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.
 - Procurement of supplies, equipment, and services that cost more than \$250,000 are required to follow formal procurement methods described in the US Code of Federal 10 Regulations 2 CFR 200.320 Methods of procurement to be followed, available at this link: <https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-2/section-200.320>
 - “Equipment” is defined as tangible, non-expendable, personal property having a useful life of more than one year and an acquisition cost of \$10,000 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 the funding source following the completion of the project. For further information, see 2 CFR 200.1 “Equipment”.
- **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, NEIWPCC, and EPA in a suitable file format. LCBP, NEIWPCC, and 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 subject to 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.
 - **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/sites/default/files/2014-08/documents/national_geospatial_data_policy_0.pdf). 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://www.epa.gov/geospatial/epa-metadata-editor>. 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.

- **Insurance Requirements:** NEIWPCC 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:
 - 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. These limits may be achieved through the combined use of an umbrella policy.
- **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 <https://www.epa.gov/grants/grant-terms-and-conditions#general>. Subawardees are required to submit a Subrecipient Risk Assessment Form with their proposal ([see LCBP Grantee 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.
- **UEI Number:** The official entity identifier for doing business with the U.S. Government and NEIWPCC 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 NEIWPCC Contractors as part of the agreement process. Existing NEIWPCC 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.
- **Build America, Buy America requirements:** Subawards or contracts awarded more than \$250,000 are subject to the [Build America Buy America Act](#) (BABA) requirements. Under the BABA Act, “none of the funds made available for a Federal financial assistance program for infrastructure... may be obligated for 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 (BABA) Act, P.L. 117-58, Secs 70911 – 70917).

- **Project Schedule:** Successful applicants will complete projects according to the following schedule (subject to change):

| | |
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| Informational Webinar (register for the Zoom meeting here) | Monday, August 11, 2025 at 10am |
| Proposals due to LCBP | November 12, 2025 at 5pm |
| Applicants notified of funding decisions | January 2026 |
| Detailed project workplan due | February 2026 |
| Project start | April 2026 |
| Project deliverables and final report due on or before | December 31, 2028. Extensions are not possible. |

VII. Proposal evaluation and selection criteria

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

1. **Impact (40 points).** Extent to which project outputs will contribute to the goals of this request identified in section II, contribute to the restoration of Lake Champlain, primarily advance the Clean Water and Healthy Ecosystems goals, and secondarily (if applicable) Thriving Communities and/or Informed and Involved Public goals of *Opportunities for Action*.
2. **Likelihood of success (20 points).** The extent to which the project team demonstrates that project outputs can and will be accomplished with high quality, on time with the proposed schedule, and within the proposed budget.
3. **Long-term plan (15 points).** Strength of short (e.g., 5-year) and long-term stewardship plan (e.g., 20-year or longer) for project success beyond the life of the grant, including potential restoration actions.
4. **Budget (10 points).** The appropriateness and efficiency of the proposed funding request, overall project budget, and any non-federal match in relation to the project’s scope and expected outcomes. Budgets should clearly prioritize costs that support the primary goals of this funding category: Clean Water and Healthy Ecosystems. Costs related to secondary benefits, such as improved public access, should be proportionate and reflect their secondary importance in project outcomes. Although non-federal match is not required, it will be viewed favorably in this criterion.
5. **Outreach (10 points).** Extent to which the need for and benefits of the project will be communicated with local communities and stakeholders.
6. **Prior performance of project team (5 points).** Extent to which the project team has successfully completed LCBP projects in the past with high quality outputs delivered on time within planned schedules and budgets. New applicants with a record of success

delivering high quality outputs on time may also receive a full score (5 points) in this category.

Appropriate use of funds

1. LCBP grant funds **cannot be used** to:
 - a. produce for-profit products
 - b. cover costs associated with regulatory compliance
 - c. support direct fundraising efforts.
 - d. support endowment funds
 - e. support legislative advocacy of any kind
 - f. pay for the purchase of food or beverages.
2. Requests for funds solely to support stewardship costs associated with existing conserved lands will not be considered in this RFP.
3. To ensure long-term conservation outcomes through permanent acquisition or conservation easements, proposals that include the purchase of land with the intent to subsequently re-sell to another party will not be considered for funding.
4. All activities on parcels conserved through awarded funds must align with the goals of this program, meet EPA requirements, and comply with the [required EPA deed language](#). Proposals involving land uses that could undermine the conservation value related to Clean Water or Healthy Ecosystems—or parcels at risk of such uses in the future—will not be considered.
5. NEIWPCC will reimburse awardees on a task-based schedule for fully completed tasks, including for tasks that include any parcel or easement purchases. Awardees will receive reimbursement once proper documentation is provided for each completed task per the project workplan and NEIWPCC contract.
6. All activities and benefits supported by this grant program must take place in the U.S. portion of the Lake Champlain Basin.

VIII. Proposal Submission

The Lake Champlain Basin Program uses [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.

All proposals must be submitted via [Foundant](#).

To apply:

- Applicants will create a user account to log into [Foundant](#). The user must also provide information about their organization or company at that time.
 - Foundant allows for multiple user accounts per organization. Applicant accounts will automatically connect to other accounts from the same organization that share a Federal Tax ID (EIN) number.
- Applicants identify the desired grant category and begin the proposal submission process.

- Proposals may be saved and revisited prior to final submission. Once submitted, applications are considered final and may not be edited.
- Applicants may invite partners to assist with the application within [Foundant](#). This is done through the collaboration feature.

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

The application for this grant opportunity can be viewed below. The application may also be previewed by visiting [this link](#).