



2013 *Opportunities for Action* Local Implementation Grants: GRANT GUIDELINES

Introduction and Background

Lake Champlain Basin Program and *Opportunities for Action*

The Lake Champlain Basin Program (LCBP) is a partnership among the States of New York and Vermont, the Province of Québec, the US Environmental Protection Agency, the New England Interstate Water Pollution Control Commission, other federal and local government agencies, and many local groups, both public and private. Created by the Lake Champlain Special Designation Act of 1990 and reauthorized in 2002, the LCBP's goal is to work cooperatively to protect and enhance the environmental integrity and the social and economic benefits of the Lake Champlain Basin, primarily through implementation of its comprehensive management plan *Opportunities for Action: An Evolving Plan for the Future of the Lake Champlain Basin*. *Opportunities for Action*, last revised in 2010, calls for actions addressing water quality, toxic substances, living natural resources, recreation and cultural heritage resources, economics, education and outreach, monitoring, and data management. The plan also calls for the active involvement of local communities. Successful implementation of the plan is achieved by continued partnership among natural resource agencies, citizens, and other lake and watershed stakeholders throughout the Basin. Since 1992, the LCBP has sponsored 784 local projects.

Opportunities for Action is available from the LCBP office or online at <http://plan.lcbp.org/>

Local Implementation Grants

The 2013 Local Implementation Grants will support local community involvement in the implementation of *Opportunities for Action*. LCBP anticipates funding these grants through agreements with the Great Lakes Fishery Commission and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency with appropriations supported by U.S. Senator Patrick Leahy. Four categories of grants are available: **(A) Pollution Prevention Grants (see page 5)**, **(B) Aquatic Invasive Species Spread Prevention Grants (see page 6)**, **(C) Education and Outreach Grants (see page 7)**, and **(D) Organizational Support Grants (see page 8)**.

General grant guidelines for LCBP's local implementation grants pertaining to all applicants are provided below. These guidelines are followed by descriptions of the four categories of Local Implementation grants – including the purpose, eligibility information, and selection criteria for each. Please read this information carefully and match proposed projects with the most appropriate grant category before proceeding with an application. No more than one unique application may be submitted by the same organization in any single grant category. Each application must be submitted to one (and only one) of the four categories A through D listed in bold above.

We encourage prospective applicants to contact the LCBP for further explanation of the requirements and policies summarized here. PLEASE NOTE: The guidelines contained in this document are not applicable to other LCBP grant programs.

PLEASE NOTE: Ten hardcopies and an electronic copy of your application MUST be received in the LCBP office in Grand Isle, VT by 4:30 PM, Thursday, November 14, 2013. Faxed submissions will not be accepted.

Other Grant Programs

In addition to these grants, the LCBP sponsors other grant programs. There also are several other funding opportunities for projects within the Lake Champlain Basin. Please visit the LCBP website (<http://www.lcbp.org/about-us/grants-rfps/>) for more information.

Grant Guidelines for all Local Implementation Grants

All local implementation grant applications received will be reviewed by an external review committee and evaluated based on the category-specific selection criteria described in subsequent sections of this guide. The following guidelines pertain to all Local Implementation Grant applications. They are provided to help prospective applicants develop competitive grant applications.

LCBP Staff Support

Because LCBP staff do not participate on the review committees that make award decisions, staff is available to assist applicants in the interpretation of these application guidelines and in the development of their applications. **All** prospective applicants are encouraged to contact the LCBP office before submitting applications. Once awards are announced, LCBP staff can assist with the development of a detailed project workplan and Quality Assurance Project Plan, as needed, and will be available to provide technical support throughout the duration of funded projects.

Staff contacts:

Eric Howe, Technical Coordinator –pollution prevention proposals – (802) 372-0218, ehowe@lcbp.org

Stephanie Castle, Technical Associate – for questions on quality assurance measures for any proposal, and for clarification of this document – (802) 372-0220, scastle@lcbp.org

Meg Modley, Aquatic Invasive Species Management Coordinator – for aquatic invasive species spread prevention proposals, and for AIS spread prevention measures for any proposal incorporating field work – (802) 372-0215, mmodley@lcbp.org

Colleen Hickey, Education and Outreach Coordinator – for education and outreach and organizational support proposals – (802) 372-0211, chickey@lcbp.org

Eligibility of Past LCBP Grant Recipients

Groups with ongoing LCBP-funded projects must be in good standing (i.e. all due deliverables have been received by LCBP) to be eligible to apply for additional funds. Project work described in new applications must be distinct from work described in any ongoing project workplans. Extensions of ongoing projects with new tasks and deliverables will be considered if the grant holder has demonstrated satisfactory progress on the current grant. Applicants considering extending or expanding an existing LCBP project through this grant program should contact LCBP staff prior to submitting a proposal.

Letters of Participation and Support

- Signed letters confirming the participation of each major partner involved with your project (if any) must be attached to your application. A partner is any entity (other than the primary applicant) whose participation and cooperation is necessary for the success of the project. For projects occurring on or requiring access to private property, a letter of permission from the land owner must be included.
- A maximum of three additional letters of support may also be included. If more than three letters of support are included with your application, only the first three received will be considered.
- All letters must be submitted with the application.

Projects Incorporating Field Work

ALL applicants submitting a proposal in response to this RFP for projects including any type of field work (i.e. direct interaction between project participants and the environment) **MUST** describe in their proposal the invasive species spread prevention measures that will be implemented in the course of conducting the field component of the project. More information about invasive species spread prevention procedures can be found on the LCBP website: <http://www.lcbp.org/water-environment/aquatic-invasive-species/aquatic-invasive-species-spread/>. If you have any questions regarding whether or not your project may require spread prevention measures, please contact Meg

Modley (see staff contract information on page 2).

Quality Assurance Project Plans

Quality Assurance Project Plans (QAPPs) are required for all LCBP-funded projects involving the collection, generation, compilation, management, analysis, evaluation, and/or use of environmental data. When necessary, successful grant applicants will incorporate the preparation of a QAPP into their project workplan. However, not all projects proposed in response to this RFP will require a QAPP, dependent on the nature of the project work.

Please contact Stephanie Castle (see staff contract information on page 2) prior to submitting an application if the proposed project involves data collection or analysis.

A project's QAPP must be fully-approved by LCBP before any environmental data collection or analysis activities can begin. Grant recipients will not receive payment for any data collection or analysis work conducted prior to QAPP approval. The QAPP development and approval process can be quite lengthy (up to 90 days, depending on the scope of the project), so please make sure that an appropriate amount of time and effort has been allocated to this step in the project budget and timeline. More information about the LCBP QAPP process can be found on the LCBP website, here: <http://www.lcbp.org/about-us/grants-rfps/grant-toolkit/qapp/>.

Please note: Projects including field work scheduled for the 2014 field season are appropriate in response to this RFP. The first anticipated date for new QAPP approval is April 2014. Applicants with projects incorporating field work or other environmental data operations should not indicate that such work will begin prior to April 2014. Alternate timeframes for generic or continuing QAPPs will be considered.

Development of Project Budgets

About Direct and Indirect Costs:

The LCBP encourages applicants to budget costs that are associated with the project as direct expenses, including personnel costs, travel, project supplies, mailings, phone costs, office supplies, etc. However, use of some grant funds for indirect costs also is allowable, subject to both the provisions of OMB Circular A-87 and LCBP approval. If you need further guidance, contact the LCBP or look refer to http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/circulars_a087_2004. **Sections D, E, and F of Attachment A** provide a nice overview of Direct and Indirect costs.

Restrictions

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

Vague or inflated budgets will not be competitive.

Local Contribution of Matching Funds (optional)

- Applicants should clearly document the intended source(s) and use(s) of such match contributions in the budget section of your application.
- General volunteer hours (work days, trainings, etc.) for optional in-kind match are usually calculated at \$10-15 per hour. Specialized volunteer work (computer consulting, accounting, etc.) can be calculated at a higher rate.
- Funds from federal government sources may not be used for matching contributions.

Partial Funding

Each year, the LCBP receives applications for many more worthwhile projects than its resources can support. Because the LCBP seeks to support as many of these projects as possible, grant review committees may recommend offering only a portion of the funding requested in an application. In such cases, the LCBP will provide guidance to the applicant on how the awarded grant funds should be applied.

Project Workplan Development

Within sixty days of LCBP grant award notification, applicants must submit a detailed project workplan, which is subject to the LCBP approval process before a memorandum of agreement will be issued. The workplan describes the project's methods, timeline, deliverables and budget. 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: <http://www.lcbp.org/about-us/grants-rfps/grant-toolkit/>.

Project Time Period

Award notification is expected by late **January, 2014**. Workplans must be submitted within sixty days following award notification. Projects must be initiated within six months of award notification. Generally, projects should be completed within one year of the official project start date. Other project timeframes will be considered if warranted. *Awardees should not expect to begin work on a project before early March, 2014.*

Memorandum of Agreement

Following approval of the project workplan by LCBP, each award recipient will enter into a formal memorandum of agreement with the New England Interstate Water Pollution Control Commission (NEIWPCC), which administers local implementation grant funds on behalf of the LCBP. The MOA will describe the project's timeframe, LCBP supported budget, and required deliverables. Recipients will enter into MOAs with NEIWPCC via an electronic agreements process. For more information, please see NEIWPCC's guide to electronic contracting: <http://www.neiwpcc.org/contractors/contractor-docs/GuidetoContractProcess.pdf>

Payment Procedures

- LCBP funds will be available on a reimbursement basis only in response to project invoices documenting the eligible costs you incurred. Invoicing will be based on completion of (or documented progress towards completion of) deliverables identified within the workplan budget (NEW in 2013).
- Awardees should expect a 4 to 6 week turn-around time between LCBP's receipt of an invoice and receipt of payment.
- **The LCBP cannot reimburse for work done prior to the official MOA start date or after the MOA end date.** If you anticipate project work extending beyond the MOA end date, contact the LCBP immediately to discuss whether you may be eligible for an amendment to your project that extends the timeline.
- Following LCBP approval of invoices, payment will be issued by NEIWPCC.

Reporting and Publicity

Awardees will be required to submit brief progress reports at the close of each calendar quarter and a final project report at the conclusion of the grant. Also, awardees may be asked to prepare press releases citing the LCBP as a funding source at the project's inception and conclusion. LCBP report templates are at: <http://www.lcbp.org/about-us/grants-rfps/grant-toolkit/>.

Funding Acknowledgements

All press materials and printed products from funded projects must acknowledge the Lake Champlain Basin Program, the New England Interstate Water Pollution Control Commission, and the original source of federal or non-federal funding. Each local implementation grant MOA will contain a funding acknowledgement statement that grant recipients should use on their project-funded products. Additionally, inclusion of the LCBP and NEIWPCC logos, available from the NEIWPCC website, may be appropriate on published materials supported by the grant (<http://www.neiwpcc.org/contractors/guidance.asp>).

A. Pollution Prevention Grants

PURPOSE:

This grant category supports projects up to \$15,000. Requests for more than \$15,000 will not be considered. Projects may address any of the priorities identified in *Opportunities for Action*, but those that address **reducing nonpoint source inputs of phosphorus and/or toxic substances from urban and/or agricultural areas** will rank higher in the review process. Projects that incorporate flood-resilient practices will be awarded up to five extra points in the selection criteria. Recall that all applicants submitting a proposal including any type of field work must describe the invasive species spread prevention measures that will be implemented in the course of conducting the field component of the project.

Total amount of funding expected to be available for this grant category: \$123,500

ELIGIBILITY:

- Local government entities including municipal boards, commissions, or committees;
- Public or private schools or other educational institutions;
- Natural Resource Conservation Districts (VT) and Soil and Water Conservation Districts (NY);
- Organizations with 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation status, or citizen groups such as watershed or lake associations working in coordination with such an organization, that applies on their behalf and will manage the grant funds; and
- Private businesses, individuals, and state government agencies may collaborate with one of the above groups, but are not eligible to be the primary applicant under this grant program.

SELECTION CRITERIA:

Applications will be evaluated according to the following criteria. An external peer review committee will evaluate and rank applications for funding, and make award recommendations to the Lake Champlain Steering Committee. The Lake Champlain Steering Committee will make all decisions on project awards. The decisions of the Steering Committee are final and may not be appealed.

1. (30 points) Merit of the project and the extent to which the project will result in tangible benefits or improvements that can be clearly measured toward pollution prevention or reduction.
2. (20 points) Extent to which the project addresses any of the applicable pollution prevention priorities in *Opportunities for Action* (2010 edition), and particularly the reduction of nonpoint source inputs of phosphorus and/or toxic substances from urban and/or agricultural areas.
3. (20 points) Extent to which the objectives and tasks support the project concept and are feasible within the proposed schedule. Deliverables should demonstrate task completion and support project continuation.
4. (10 points) Feasibility of the proposed methods.
5. (5 points) Capacity of the organization for carrying out the project.
6. (5 points) Incorporation of a flood resilience component in the project (NEW in 2013).
7. (10 points) Appropriateness and clarity of the proposed budget, relative to project objectives. The total funding request must be within the limit of the grant category. Vague or inflated budgets will not be competitive.

B. Aquatic Invasive Species Spread Prevention Grants

PURPOSE:

This grant category supports projects up to \$15,000. Requests for more than \$15,000 will not be considered. Projects may address any of the priorities identified in *Opportunities for Action*, but those that address the following areas will rank higher in the review process:

- Reducing the spread and impact of aquatic invasive species;
- Establishing or expanding early detection and monitoring programs;
- Supporting boat launch or other lake/river access greeter programs designed to inform lake/river users and prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species.

Total amount of funding expected to be available for this grant category: \$123,500

ELIGIBILITY:

- Local government entities including municipal boards, commissions, or committees;
- Public or private schools or other educational institutions;
- Natural Resource Conservation Districts (VT) and Soil and Water Conservation Districts (NY);
- Organizations with 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation status, or citizen groups such as watershed or lake associations working in coordination with such an organization, that applies on their behalf and will manage the grant funds; and
- Private businesses, individuals, and state government agencies may collaborate with one of the above groups, but are not eligible to be the primary applicant under this grant program.

SELECTION CRITERIA:

Applications will be evaluated according to the following criteria. An external peer review committee will evaluate and rank applications for funding, and make award recommendations to the Lake Champlain Steering Committee. The Lake Champlain Steering Committee will make all decisions on project awards. The decisions of the Steering Committee are final and may not be appealed.

1. (30 points) Merit of the project and the extent to which the project will result in tangible benefits or improvements that can be clearly measured toward aquatic invasive species spread prevention.
2. (20 points) Extent to which the project addresses any of the applicable aquatic invasive species spread prevention priorities in *Opportunities for Action* (2010 edition), and particularly the reduction of aquatic invasive species spread and impact, the establishment or expansion of early detection monitoring, and/or boat launch/greeter programs.
3. (20 points) Extent to which the objectives and tasks support the project concept and are feasible within the proposed schedule. Deliverables should demonstrate task completion and support project continuation.
4. (10 points) Feasibility of the proposed methods.
5. (10 points) Capacity of the organization for carrying out the project.
6. (10 points) Appropriateness and clarity of the proposed budget, relative to project objectives. The total funding request must be within the limit of the grant category. Vague or inflated budgets will not be competitive.

C. Education and Outreach Grants

PURPOSE:

The Education and Outreach Grants provide up to \$7,500 to eligible groups to inform students and/or adults about key Lake Champlain issues identified in the management plan *Opportunities for Action*. The objective is to develop awareness, knowledge, skills and commitment on a basin issue leading to informed decisions and constructive actions that will benefit Lake Champlain. Proposals incorporating hands-on activities for citizens are encouraged. Requests for more than \$7,500 will not be considered. Recall that all applicants submitting a proposal including any type of field component must describe the invasive species spread prevention measures that will be implemented while in the field.

Total amount of funding expected to be available for this grant category: \$101,300

ELIGIBILITY:

- Local government entities including municipal boards, commissions, or committees;
- Public or private schools or other educational institutions;
- Natural Resource Conservation Districts (VT) and Soil and Water Conservation Districts (NY);
- Organizations with 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation status, or citizen groups such as watershed or lake associations working in coordination with such an organization, that applies on their behalf and will manage the grant funds; and
- Private businesses, individuals, and state government agencies may collaborate with one of the above groups, but are not eligible to be the primary applicant under this grant program.

SELECTION CRITERIA:

Applications will be evaluated according to the following criteria. An external peer review committee will evaluate and rank applications for funding, and make award recommendations to the Lake Champlain Steering Committee. The Lake Champlain Steering Committee will make all decisions on project awards. The decisions of the Steering Committee are final and may not be appealed.

1. (25 points) Extent to which the project will inform adults and students about Lake Champlain issues, specifically topics included in *Opportunities for Action*.
2. (25 points) Merit of the project and the extent to which the project will result in tangible products or benefits that can be measured. The proposed methods and capacity of the organization for carrying out the project should be feasible.
3. (20 points) Extent to which the project reaches new audiences and/or encourages hands-on activities for citizens. Extent to which the project enhances other education and outreach efforts in the basin (VT, NY and QC).
4. (10 points) Extent to which the applicant demonstrates the commitment to work with other partners and/or leverage other funding sources to achieve project goals. Multi-jurisdictional projects are encouraged. Projects taking place on private land should show a clear benefit to the surrounding community.
5. (10 points) Knowledge or experience with education and outreach related to Lake Champlain, and the applicant's past performance on similar projects, if applicable.
6. (10 points) Appropriateness and clarity of the proposed budget, relative to project objectives. The total funding request must be within the limit of the grant category. Vague or inflated budgets will not be competitive. Clarity and conciseness of proposal, adherence to format and relevance to RFP. **Please note that LCBP funding cannot be used to pay admission fees or to purchase tickets for museum visits, movie screenings, etc.**

D. Organizational Support Grants

PURPOSE:

The Organizational Support grants provide up to \$3,000 to support increased organizational capacity and long-term effectiveness of non-profit watershed organizations working to implement elements of *Opportunities for Action*. Requests for more than \$3,000 will not be considered. The intent of these grants is to assist watershed organizations with the early stages of their development or to assist established watershed organizations in strengthening their organizational capacity.

Total amount of funding expected to be available for this grant category: \$26,600

ELIGIBILITY:

Specific Qualifying Information: All organizations seeking grants in this category must have nonprofit 501(c)(3) status AND must have an organizational mission statement focused on achieving water quality improvements in the Lake Champlain watershed.

Examples of Eligible Expenses:

- Purchase of software for improved database or financial management (such as GIS or bookkeeping and accounting software);
- Follow up field assessment checks of success/failure of plantings and other field based projects.
- Strategic planning or other types of board development; and
- Training of staff or volunteers for:
 - a) volunteer recruitment and management;
 - b) grant writing;
 - c) membership recruitment and retention; and
 - d) field techniques/field data collection.

Proposals for regular on-going operational expenses are not likely to be competitive.

SELECTION CRITERIA:

Applications will be evaluated according to the following criteria, based on the information provided in your application. An external peer review committee will evaluate and rank applications for funding, and make award recommendations to the Lake Champlain Steering Committee. The Lake Champlain Steering Committee will make all decisions on project awards. The decisions of the Steering Committee are final and may not be appealed.

1. (40 points) Extent to which the proposal will strengthen the capacity of eligible organizations. (See above for eligibility guidelines).
2. (30 points) Merit of the proposal and the extent to which the proposal will result in tangible benefits or improvements that can be clearly measured.
3. (30 points) Appropriateness and clarity of the proposed budget, relative to project objectives. The total funding request must be within the limit of the grant category. Vague or inflated budgets will not be considered competitive.