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Lake Champlain Basin Program Announcement

Request for Technical Pre-Proposals to Implement *Opportunities for Action*

The Lake Champlain Basin Program (LCBP), in partnership with NEIWPC is pleased to announce a Request for Pre-Proposals for services to further the mission of the LCBP and address the tasks outlined in our guiding document, [Opportunities for Action](#). The total request for each project may range from \$20,000 to \$300,000.

The pre-proposal should be a two-page document to introduce the project, adhering to the format requirements below. After review of the submitted pre-proposals, a subset of applicants will be asked to submit a full proposal for funding consideration for projects to begin in early 2022 (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 strategies and tasks outlined in *Opportunities for Action*. LCBP is particularly interested in funding projects that address the following priorities (priorities are not listed in order of importance):

1. Development of a comprehensive, binational phosphorus mass balance model for the Missisquoi Bay watershed, including all phosphorus inputs and outputs.
2. Conservation and restoration research or implementation projects that support:
 - a. native species and their habitat,
 - b. water quality, and/or
 - c. flood resilience.
3. Development of Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) tools that fill defined needs for partners implementing PES or Payment for Performance systems in the Lake Champlain Basin, and that support the LCBP mission.
4. Stream geomorphic assessments, stormwater master plans, and/or inland lake watershed action plans in under-assessed areas of the Lake Champlain Basin, with priority given to subwatersheds that currently have significant gaps in assessment.
5. Research on contaminants such as plastics, heavy metals, pharmaceuticals, personal care products, or per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances; or work to replicate previous assessments for mercury concentrations in Lake Champlain fish tissue.
6. Environmental Sensitivity Index mapping to prepare for a potential oil or chemical spill.

We anticipate these projects will be supported with funds awarded to NEIWPC by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Great Lakes Fishery Commission in support of the Lake Champlain Basin Program. This Request for Technical Pre-Proposals is available at the [Lake Champlain Basin Program website](#).

PRE-PROPOSAL DEADLINE NOTICE: Only electronic pre-proposals will be accepted and must be received by Kathy Jarvis (grants@lcbp.org) at the Lake Champlain Basin Program by:

November 6, 2020

Late or incomplete pre-proposals will not be considered.

Lake Champlain Basin Program

Request for Technical Pre-Proposals to Implement *Opportunities for Action*

Overview of Lake Champlain Basin Program and NEIWPC

Congress designated Lake Champlain as a resource of national significance with the Lake Champlain Special Designation Act of 1990. The Special Designation Act also established the Lake Champlain Basin Program (LCBP) and authorized it to receive direct support from the U.S. EPA under the Clean Water Act. LCBP coordinates and funds efforts that benefit the Lake Champlain Basin's water quality, fisheries, economy, wetlands, wildlife, recreation, and cultural resources, and works in partnership with government agencies, private organizations, local communities, and individuals from New York, Vermont, and Québec. These efforts are guided by the comprehensive management plan [Opportunities for Action: An Evolving Plan for the Future of the Lake Champlain Basin](#).

Since 1992, NEIWPC has served as the primary program administrator of LCBP at the request of the Lake Champlain Steering Committee, and administers the program's personnel and finances. NEIWPC is a regional commission that helps the states of the Northeast preserve and advance water quality. NEIWPC engages and convenes water quality professionals and other interested parties from New England and New York to collaborate on water, wastewater, and environmental science challenges across shared regions, ecosystems, and areas of expertise.

I. Grant award process

The Lake Champlain Steering Committee developed a new process in 2017 to identify technical projects that address priorities identified in *Opportunities for Action*, a long-term management plan for the Lake Champlain Basin. LCBP issues this request for two-page pre-proposals that address any 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 2022. The aim of this process is to invite a wide range of innovative and effective 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 \$20,000 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 requires less than \$20,000, you may respond to our Local Implementation Grants Request for Proposals. 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 Matthew Vaughan, LCBP Technical Coordinator (mvaughan@lcbp.org) with any questions.

II. Priorities for funding

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

1. Development of a comprehensive, binational phosphorus mass balance model for the Missisquoi Bay watershed, including all phosphorus inputs and outputs.
2. Conservation and restoration research or implementation projects that support:
 - a. native species and their habitat,
 - b. water quality, and/or
 - c. flood resilience.
3. Development of Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) tools that fill defined needs for partners implementing PES or Payment for Performance systems in the Lake Champlain Basin, and that support the LCBP mission.
4. Stream geomorphic assessments, stormwater master plans, and/or inland lake watershed action plans in under-assessed areas of the Lake Champlain Basin, with priority given to subwatersheds that currently have significant gaps in assessment.
5. Research on contaminants such as plastics, heavy metals, pharmaceuticals, personal care products, or per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances; or work to replicate previous assessments for mercury concentrations in Lake Champlain fish tissue.
6. Environmental Sensitivity Index mapping to prepare for a potential oil or chemical spill.

Additional resources:

- International Joint Commission Report: *Nutrient Loading and Impacts in Lake Champlain – Missisquoi Bay and Lake Memphremagog* (Links to report: [English](#) and [French](#)). Priority 1 in this RFP is a primary recommendation of this report.
- [Lake Eden Watershed Action Plan](#) (to provide an example)
- Stormwater planning guidelines and information for [New York](#) and [Vermont](#)
- [Green Infrastructure for Stormwater Management: Guidance for Municipal Officials in New York's Lake Champlain Basin](#), and associated [webinar recordings](#)
- [Information on Stream Geomorphic Assessment purpose, methods, and protocols](#)
- Survey of Mercury and Cyanotoxin Concentrations in Fish Tissues in Lake Champlain: [Final report and project data](#) and [Quality Assurance Project Plan](#)
- [Resources available for Environmental Sensitivity Index mapping](#), compiled by an LCBP internship

[More resources and information will be posted at this link.](#)

III. Eligibility

Eligible organizations include colleges, universities, nonprofit organizations, for-profit companies, and municipalities in the US and Canada. State, provincial, and federal government entities are not eligible to apply. The successful applicant 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.

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	November 6, 2020
Subset of applicants invited to submit full proposals	December 2020
Full proposals due to LCBP	February 2020 (date TBD – approx. seven weeks after notice)
Applicants notified of funding decisions	June 2021
Detailed project workplan due	August 2021
Project start date	January 2022
Project deliverables and final report due	Up to 3 years after start date

V. Summary of Other Requirements for Selected Projects

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

1. Following initial notification of the award, a workplan must be approved by LCBP before a contract agreement can be executed and the work begun. Compensation cannot begin until the workplan is approved and a contract is executed. The workplan will detail the logistical elements of the project, including deliverables and project timeline. Information about the LCBP grant process, workplan development guidelines, and reporting requirements can be found on the LCBP website at: <http://www.lcbp.org/about-us/grants-rfps/grant-toolkit/>. The successful applicant will enter into a contract with NEIWPC in order to complete the work and will be compensated upon completion of workplan deliverables.
2. If a project includes collection of any primary or secondary data or involves a modeling effort, it will require a Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP). Once the grant agreement has been executed, the contractor must develop a QAPP to be approved before the beginning of any data collection or secondary data analyses. More information about LCBP Quality Assurance Plans can be found at: <http://www.lcbp.org/about-us/grants-rfps/grant-toolkit/qapp/>. A QAPP generally takes four weeks for approval following submission.
3. The successful applicant will prepare 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.
4. 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 LCBP'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 or NEIWPC public outreach materials.

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, NEIWPCC, and appropriate funding agencies in a suitable file format. LCBP, NEIWPCC, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and Great Lakes Fishery Commission 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, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Great Lakes Fishery Commission, and NEIWPCC 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 http://www.epa.gov/geospatial/docs/National_Geospatial_Data_Policy.pdf). Specifically, the selected contractor must provide documentation for all produced data, including source information for each digital data layer and specific information about the data layer itself, (e.g., 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 and NEIWPCC as a final deliverable.
7. 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.
8. LCBP encourages groups to budget costs that are associated with the project as direct expenses, including personnel costs, travel, project supplies, mailings, phone costs, office supplies, etc. Use of some grant funds for indirect costs is also allowable, subject to both the provisions of OMB Circular A-87 and LCBP approval. If you need further guidance, contact the LCBP or refer to [OMB Circular A-87 \(Revised\)](#). Sections D, E, and F of Attachment A provide an overview of direct and indirect costs. For projects in response to this RFP, the indirect budget should not

exceed 10% of the direct project budget, and indirect offered as match should similarly not exceed 10% of direct match contributed, unless a higher federally negotiated indirect rate is in place. The LCBP/NEIWPC Indirect Policy can be found here: <http://www.lcbp.org/about-us/grants-rfps/grant-toolkit/>

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

VI. Pre-Proposal Evaluation and Selection Criteria

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

1. Impact: Potential to advance goals of *Opportunities for Action* and the mission of LCBP (20 points).
2. Technical feasibility: Extent to which the project can be executed, and the appropriateness of the methods (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 (10 points).
4. Likelihood of success: Assessment of risk versus benefit for the project (10 points).

5. Additional points will be given to projects that address the priorities listed in Section II (10 points if any priority is met).
6. Additional points will be given to projects that emphasize inclusion of or target work in underserved or minority communities (up to 5 points).

VII. Available Funds and Match Requirements

This request for pre-proposals is in anticipation of LCBP fund appropriations for the fiscal year beginning October 1, 2021. Funds are anticipated to be available for projects to begin in early 2022. All awards are subject to available funding and LCBP is not obligated to issue any funds under this request.

VIII. Period of Performance

Work is expected to begin no earlier than **January, 2022** 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.

IX. Schedule and Requirements for Pre-Proposal Submission

1. Please follow the format outlined in the attached Technical Pre-Proposal Format Requirements.
2. Only editable electronic copies will be accepted and must be received via email in Microsoft Word or Word-compatible format by **November 6, 2020** to Kathy Jarvis (grants@lcbp.org). A PDF may also be provided.

X. Contact Information

Please direct all inquiries to:

Matthew Vaughan

LCBP Technical Coordinator

mvaughan@lcbp.org

Pre-Proposal Format Requirements

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

TITLE: Please include a concise and descriptive title.

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

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

DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT SCOPE, OUTPUTS, OUTCOMES, METHODS, AND TIMEFRAME: Use this space as you see fit to briefly describe your project and explain how it will contribute toward LCBP's mission and goals outlined in *Opportunities for Action*. Please note the following definitions: An **output** is an activity or product generated as a result of a task, e.g., treatment of six acres of run-off area, holding four public meetings, or generating an educational document. An **outcome** is a result or effect of all activities, e.g., reduced phosphorus loading to Lake Champlain through the Winooski River, or the public is better informed on aquatic invasive species. Please also list any anticipated partnerships. Letters of support and for landowner permission may be provided with the pre-proposal or later at the full proposal stage.

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

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

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