Frequently Asked Questions and Answers
Request for Proposals 2021

Research Focus

Q: Could a proposal focus on research across all of Vermont?
A: The proposal should focus on benefits for the Lake Champlain basin, though some research and benefits may also take place outside of the basin. The Vermont Water Resources and Lake Studies Center funds research on water quality and water quantity in all parts of Vermont.

Q: Do references to lake ecology mean only ecology in the lake itself is of interest?
A: We think of the lake as a system and are interested in the water bodies, wetlands riparian areas, etc., that are part of the Lake Champlain basin.

Q: By clean water initiatives, does LCSG have specific initiatives in mind?
A: LCSG intends to integrate as deeply as it can with local, state, regional stakeholders. We welcome proposals that will benefit all clean water initiatives, including the Vermont Clean Water Initiative.

Q: Are proposals around environmental literacy welcome?
A: Yes, LCSG has a focus area on environmental literacy and workforce development and two related goals.

Q: Should proposals connect to multiple focus area goals?
A: Proposals are reviewed by external technical experts, and then by local stakeholders to review the relevancy of the work to the LCSG strategic plan, the RFP, and current issues. Proposals should describe their applicability to as many focus area goals as is appropriate. There is no benefit in terms of review points to linking to more focus area goals.

Q: Are projects focused on basic research welcome?
A: Yes. We want potentially transformative projects, and basic research can be transformative. Proposals, including basic research proposals, should identify potential benefits to the communities. In general, proposals with benefits to communities, strong relevance to LCSG’s strategic plan, and public education and public policy components are more likely to be successful. Keep in mind that proposals will be scored by both technical reviewers and local stakeholders.

Q: Would research projects that are rooted in a particular place or particular community be competitive?
A: Yes. Most of what we do is place-based. It is advisable that the proposal explain how the research would benefit the one community and how the approach or results are somehow translatable to other places.

Q: Would Sea Grant consider funding the continuation of a project has already begun?
A: It is ok for a proposal to be part of a continuum, but a continuation of ongoing activities with no results in the project period is unlikely to be competitive. A stronger proposal would describe and demonstrate some research results at the end of the two-year project period and at the end of a the larger research period.

Communications, Outreach, and Engagement

Q: What are some examples of communications outreach efforts?
A: Workshops, reports, focus groups, curricula, film/video, community media, general media news stories, features in EcoNews VT (research digest), guidance documents, collaboration with extension agents (including LCSG), trainings, presentations, and fact sheets are some examples of communications outreach efforts and outputs. It is important to identify and work with stakeholders at the outset to increase the likelihood that the research project will produce outputs that are useful for stakeholders and research findings that will have outcomes for stakeholders.

Q: When could PIs contact LCSG staff re outreach efforts?
A: We are willing to help at any phase.

Administration and Budget

Q: Can projects be for one or two years?
A: You can apply for one- or two-year projects. Most proposals are for two-year projects.

Q: What is the match requirement?
A: A 50% non-federal match is required. This means that every $1 of federal funds must be matched with $0.50 of non-federal funds. Monetary and in-kind sources of match are allowed.

Q: May faculty time qualify as match? What about graduate student assistantships?
A: Both faculty time and assistantships qualify as match, as long as the source of funding is non-federal. Please check with your institution and see federal uniform guidance on indirect costs.

Q: Can the budget change between the pre-proposal and the full proposal?
A: We expect some changes in budget between the pre-proposal and the full proposal.
Q: At UVM, what is the F&A rate for Lake Champlain Sea Grant? If it is lower than the NICRA rate for research (56%), may the difference between these rates as unrecovered F&A?
A: UVM has agreed to use an F&A rate of 25.7% for all Lake Champlain Sea Grant expenses. The difference between 56% and 25.7% F&A on the direct federal budget can be used as match because these are waived indirect costs. Please check with your institution and see federal uniform guidance on indirect costs.

Q: If an institution chooses to use an F&A rate that is less than its established NICRA rate (whether it be a random lower number or an off-campus v on-campus rate), may it count the difference in the F&A (waived or unrecovered) as match?
A: As long as the institution voluntarily waives the indirect cost, the difference of what is charged as F&A on federal direct costs can be counted as match. Please check with your institution and see federal uniform guidance on indirect costs.

Q: Can businesses and NGOs use a de minimus 10% F&A rate? And if they choose not to charge any F&A, would that foregone F&A be able to count as match?
A: Yes on both counts. If the small business doesn't want to calculate their own NICRA they can use the default 10% rate set by the government. However, if they have ever had a NICRA, they are not eligible for the 10% de minimus. Foregone F&A can be counted as match. Please check with your institution and see federal uniform guidance on indirect costs.

Thank you to everyone who asked questions at the online Q&A session on January 21, 2022. Your questions are the basis of this document. Please direct additional questions about the RFP to Julianna White, Research Program Coordinator, julianna.m.white@uvm.edu.