



## **Frequently Asked Questions and Answers Request for Proposals for 2024–2026 Research Projects**

The following questions are based on a Q&A session for the 2022–2024 request for proposals. A Q&A session for the request for proposals for 2024–2026 research projects will take place Thursday, December 8, noon–1pm via Zoom. Information is available [here](#). This document will be updated after that session.

Please direct questions about the RFP to Julianna White, Research Program Coordinator, [julianna.m.white@uvm.edu](mailto:julianna.m.white@uvm.edu).

### **Research Focus**

Q: Could a proposal focus on research across all of Vermont? New York?

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. Likewise, there are other funding mechanisms for New York.

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 New York and Vermont Clean Water Initiative.

Q: Are proposals around environmental literacy welcome?

A: Yes, LCSG has a focus area on environmental literacy and workforce development with 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 for 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. All proposals, including basic research proposals, should identify potential benefits to the communities. The RFP states, "PIs must provide a strong rationale for how their proposed research will inform policies, management practices, businesses, recreational organizations, or other types of communities in the Lake Champlain basin, including underrepresented or underserved 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 also how the approach or results are somehow translatable to other places.

Q: Would Sea Grant consider funding the continuation of a project that 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 what has been done, including results, additional research results at the end of the proposed two-year project period, and additional research goals and impacts expected at the end of the larger research period.

### **Communications, Outreach, and Engagement**

Q: What are some examples of communications and outreach efforts?

A: Meetings with the public, workshops for the public or certain professionals, fact sheets and reports written for specific audiences, focus group surveys and meetings, 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 and outreach efforts and outputs. It is important to identify and work with communities or certain groups starting from the planning period to increase the likelihood that the research project will produce outputs that are useful and research findings that will lead to policy, practice, or conservation outcomes.

Q: When could PIs contact LCSG staff re communications and outreach efforts?

A: LCSG staff are willing to help at any phase. Please note that planning for communications, outreach, and engagement in the proposal development phase is important, including budgeting for related effort and activities, so PIs are encouraged to be in contact with communications and outreach professionals early on.



## 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 researchers' time/effort 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 letter of intent and the full proposal?

A: We expect some changes in budget between the letter of intent 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 be considered 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 minimis* 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 minimis*. Foregone F&A can be counted as match. Please check with your institution and see [federal uniform guidance](#) on indirect costs.