



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

The following questions are based on a Question-and-Answer webinars for the 2022–2024 and 2024–2026 requests for proposals. Please direct questions to Research Program Coordinator Julianna White at julianna.m.white@uvm.edu.

Research Focus

Q: What kinds of projects have you funded in the past?

A list of projects that have been funded in the past is available on our [Research webpage](#).

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 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 with two related goals.

Q: Is this call open for research on PFAS?

A: Yes

Q: Are primarily outreach projects solicited?

A: This is a research competition, but the knowledge gained from the project needs to be communicated to relevant audiences. Research on outreach is allowable. LCSG can and will help with outreach, but LCSG outreach staff cannot directly be budgeted.



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.

Q: Are there related calls for proposal for research?

A: Yes, prospective PIs should consider the [Vermont Water Resources and Lake Studies Center](#) for water-related research in Vermont and the [Northeastern States Research Cooperative](#) for forestry-related research in the Northern Forest.

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: Is the call limited to institutions in the LCB?

A: Collaborations from outside of the Lake Champlain basin are eligible, but research needs to take place in the basin. We want to be sure we increase the capacity of institutions in the Lake Champlain basin.

Q: Are prospective PIs from institutions that focus on undergraduate education at a disadvantage?

A: No. There is no requirement that projects have a graduate student program. Research can be conducted by anyone. Publications include peer-reviewed journal articles as well as many other types of reports.

Q: Who can be the PI?

A: Awards go to institutions, so it is institutions that decide who are eligible to be PIs.

Q: How important is recent research by the PI?

A: Technical and relevance reviewers will consider PI's records. They will look at the experience of PI's and see if they are capable to answer the proposed research questions.

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 you provide an example of an unallowable match?

A: Federally sourced match is not allowable. In-kind match is allowable, as long as it can be valued. We follow uniform guidance. Documentation will be required if the project is selected. Salary from on-campus resources for student researchers.

Q: With match, do I propose more than the value of the federal budget?

A: Yes, you must propose a project that is 1.5 times the value of the federal contribution. The budget should include both federal and match contributions.

Q: How are administrative support costs for the project paid?

A: General administration activities is supported by the facilities and administration (F&A) budget line, which is based on an agreed-upon rate based on the (modified) total direct costs and charged to the sponsor. In certain cases, institutions may decide to voluntarily discount the F&A rate and count the amount of the discount as non-federal match. This is up to the PI's institution.

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 voluntarily agreed to use a discounted 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 is unrecovered F&A and 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 is unrecovered F&A and 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 minimus*. Foregone F&A can be counted as match. 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.