



NEIWPCC and Long Island Sound Study National Estuary Program

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Initiate and Develop a Long-Term and Large-Scale Eelgrass Seed Dispersal Restoration Program

January 2025

NEIWPCC, in cooperation with Long Island Sound Study (LISS) National Estuary Program and its partners, is inviting proposals to develop and initiate a long-term and large-scale eelgrass seed dispersal restoration program. Eelgrass meadows are identified as one of the 12 priority habitats by LISS. In the 2015 Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP), the [Eelgrass Extent Ecosystem Target](#) memorialized the goal to restore and maintain an additional 2,000 acres of eelgrass by 2035 from a 2012 baseline of 1,893 acres. While the CCMP is currently under revision, the importance to restore and protect eelgrass meadows remains under the newly proposed Coastal Habitat Objective. The purpose of this program is to advance the restoration of eelgrass meadow habitat in Long Island Sound by employing a long-term, large-scale, and evidence-based approach that is adaptable in the face of a changing climate.

Applicants must submit proposals in accordance with the procedures set forth below no later than **12pm (noon) on February 28, 2025**.

NEIWPCC's award decisions are contingent on the proponent's successful negotiation of a contract with NEIWPCC. NEIWPCC will add a negotiated scope of work or workplan and budget to the standard contract terms after the award decision. NEIWPCC generally does not negotiate the standard contract terms. If you are interested in reviewing the standard contract terms prior to proposal submission, please contact the NEIWPCC project manager (Section IX).

This request for proposals (RFP) includes information on:

- I. **Overview**
- II. **Project Goal**
- III. **Scope of Work**
- IV. **General Guidelines for Applicants**
- V. **Proposal Requirements**
- VI. **Submission Process**
- VII. **Proposal Evaluation Process**

VIII. Notification of Awards

IX. Contacts

- Appendix A. Title Page Format
- Appendix B. Overall Budget Table Format
- Appendix C. Task-Based Budget Format

I. Overview

NEIWPCC

NEIWPCC is a regional commission that helps the states of the Northeast preserve and advance water quality. We engage and convene 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. Our mission is to advance clean water in the Northeast through collaboration with, and service to, our member states. NEIWPCC's vision is for clean and sustainable water throughout the Northeast. We base our work on the core values of leadership, collaboration, education, service, and science.

Long Island Sound Study

The Long Island Sound Study (LISS) is a cooperative effort involving researchers, regulators, user groups and other concerned organizations and individuals working to protect and improve the health of the Sound. Long Island Sound is one of North America's most urban and biologically diverse estuaries. Although the Sound is a resource of extraordinary productivity, it is under significant stress. Accordingly, in 1985 the states of Connecticut and New York and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recognized Long Island Sound as an Estuary of National Significance. In 1994, the state and federal partners approved the [Long Island Sound Study Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan](#) (LISS CCMP), which established an overall plan to restore and protect the Sound. In 2015, the CCMP was revised to set ambitious but achievable goals and ecosystem targets. A second revision of the CCMP is expected to be released in [2025](#).

Applicants are encouraged to review the LISS website (<http://www.longislandsoundstudy.net>) for general information about the LISS program. Applicants are also encouraged to discuss their project plans with the RFP topic contacts (identified in Section IX).

Background: Eelgrass Restoration in Long Island Sound

Eelgrass meadows (*Zostera marina*), an essential and valuable coastal submerged aquatic vegetation species, is identified as a priority habitat by Long Island Sound Study (LISS). In the 2015 Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP), the Thriving Habitats and Abundant Wildlife theme includes the ecosystem target, Eelgrass Extent. This target includes the goal to restore and maintain an additional 2,000 acres of eelgrass by 2035 from a 2012 baseline of 1,893 acres. Since 2002, eelgrass meadows have been intermittently monitored through U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service aerial surveys. The most recent aerial survey in [2017](#) showed a decline in eelgrass extent since 2012 to 1,465 acres. While these aerial surveys provide valuable insight on eelgrass distribution, there is a lack of proactive management and restoration efforts due to knowledge gaps related to distribution trends and their drivers. Furthermore, water quality and climate issues pose major impacts to eelgrass meadows' distribution and productivity, threatening eelgrass extent in Long Island Sound.

LISS developed a targeted [Long Island Sound Eelgrass Management and Restoration Strategy](#) in December 2022. The strategy provides guidance for short and long-term actions that should be taken to manage and restore eelgrass meadows in the Long Island Sound and act as a resource for other estuaries in the region facing similar issues. In FY23, LISS funded multiple partners to start implementing the strategy. These activities include enhancing eelgrass mapping, monitoring, and modeling. While these activities set LISS on the right track to better manage, protect, and restore eelgrass, there is still a major gap in restoration.

Eelgrass restoration is immensely challenging as site-specific dynamics play a large role in how the plants can survive and reproduce. In fact, most restoration projects do not yield significant increases in seagrass area – unless the effort is large-scale (i.e., many shoots or seeds) and long-term (i.e., continuous annual planting) (van Katwijk et al, 2016; Orth et al. 2020). A meta-analysis found that out of 1,178 seagrass restoration trials, averaging 409 shoots/seeds planted on a 0.93 m² standardized plant area, performance (i.e., survival and seagrass population growth rate) was most dependent on trial scale – the larger number of shoots and seeds planted initially increased the restoration success. Furthermore, the study suggests a planting threshold of 1,000 – 10,000 shoots/seed to ensure there is a positive effect on survival and growth rate (Figure 1) (van Katwijk et al., 2016). A successful example of this type of restoration, yielding 3,612 hectares or 8,925 acres, is a two-decade long effort dispersing more than 70 million seeds in Virginia’s coastal lagoons (Orth et al., 2020).

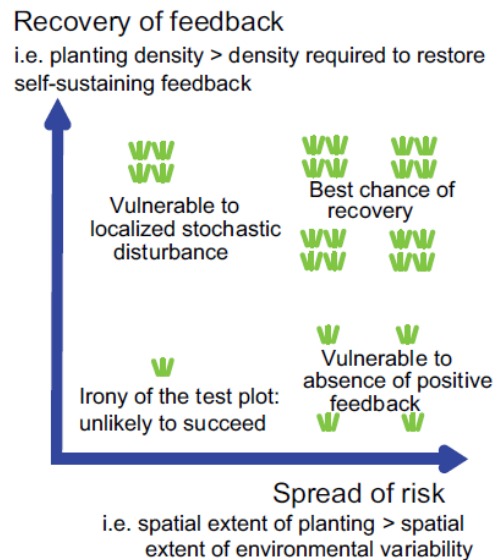


Figure 1. From van Katwijk et al. 2016: *Framework depicting the synergy to investing in spatial extent and planting density, and the trade off, given a high but limited number of plants, to invest relatively more in either spatial extent or in planting density. A large investment in high numbers may be needed for best restoration practice in dynamic systems to capture windows of opportunity generated by spatial heterogeneity (horizontal axis: spreading of risks, or spatial extent of planting, m²) and to reach threshold required to initiate self-sustaining feedback (vertical axis: recovery of feedback, or planting density, m²). Knowledge of the local environment is essential to choose the best planting strategy.*

While there has been some success with shoot transplants in Long Island Sound, utilizing seeds instead of shoot transplants has proven to be more cost-effective as the increase in the potential restoration acreage is higher, seeds are easier to collect, maintain, and broadcast, and the process is ultimately less expensive (Busch et al., 2010). In 2010, the cost for large-scale seed broadcast ranged \$45,012 - \$165,699 per hectare (or 2.5 acres) with a mean cost of \$110,860 (Busch et al., 2010). This cost comparison study by Busch and colleagues (2010) used data from restoration projects conducted in 2004-2008 where the 349,000-1,800,000 seeds (with a mean of 773,000 seeds) were broadcasted within areas of 0.71-3.84 hectares (with a mean of 1.34 hectares).

In addition to overcoming restoration challenges, it is important to consider the role climate change may have in influencing restoration goals. Globally, seagrass is declining at a rate of 7% per year (Waycott et al., 2009), but more recently, these declines are exacerbated by water temperature increases causing eelgrass to retreat from its historical range. For example, in the Peconic Estuary, NY, eelgrass is no longer present where water temperatures exceed thermal tolerances (Pickerell and Schott, 2017; O'Toole, 2020). Similar trends are found in the south where in Chesapeake Bay, widgeon grass (*Ruppia maritima*), a more heat-tolerant seagrass species, has replaced the historically dominant eelgrass in the upper watershed posing major concerns as the species does not have the same value in ecosystem services as eelgrass (Hensel et al., 2023). Not only are summer water temperatures increasing well over the optimal water temperature for eelgrass (10-20°C), but the duration of threshold exceedances (Moore and Jarvis, 2008; Moore et al., 2014; Pickerell and Schott, 2017; Jarrin et al., 2022; EPA, 2022).

Restoration managers and practitioners are considering using other populations with more resilient genetic or phenotypic traits as a restoration technique to assist other populations that may not have the same traits (Peterson et al., 2022). There is evidence that genomic variations may determine resiliency to disturbances like increasing temperature on both fine and large scales (Short et al., 2012, DuBois et al., 2021, Jeffery et al., 2023). Additionally, researchers have recommended utilizing multiple source populations to increase gene flow and thereby genetic diversity (Schenck, Hughes et al., unpublished, Reynolds et al., 2012).

This large-scale approach is recommended to introduce seagrass into stressful environments as planting in large numbers overcomes natural variability and enhances a self-sustaining feedback loop (Vaudrey et al., 2019; van Katwijk et al., 2016). In addition, annual dispersal of seeds promotes the ability of self-sustaining populations to expand naturally (Orth et al., 2020). We must also recognize the challenges of restoration in the face of climate change and therefore incorporate utilizing multiple populations and/or those identified as resilient populations. This type of restoration technique will act as an approach to combat climate change implications by allowing us to adapt the approach as new information and research becomes available and thereby allowing us to progress without delaying action (Nadeau et al., 2024).

II. Project Goal

The goals of this project are to develop and initiate a long-term and large-scale eelgrass restoration program in Long Island Sound. The long-term goals include the expansion of self-sustaining eelgrass meadows, increased genetic diversity, and thereby resiliency of eelgrass. Additional products of this program include development of innovative eelgrass seed broadcasting methods and post-restoration eelgrass monitoring.

The contractor will collaborate with a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) comprising representatives of federal and state government agencies, project leads, and industry experts. The TAC is intended to provide technical guidance, recommendations, and support the success of project implementation. The contractor is expected to participate in quarterly virtual meetings with the TAC with additional communication as needed.

III. Scope of Work

This RFP is for services to develop and initiate a long-term and large-scale eelgrass restoration program in Long Island Sound. The program will increase eelgrass meadow extent and density in Long Island Sound including expanding acreage adjacent well-established meadow, as well as explore establishing meadows in areas where there is no acreage, but suitability is high. The program will prioritize increasing gene flow and genetic diversity by using seeds from multiple populations in restoration areas. The program will also aim to build capacity in

Long Island Sound for seed-based restoration work by initiating and growing partnerships both in New York and Connecticut. In Federal Fiscal Year 2023, LISS funded multiple partners to enhance mapping, monitoring, managing, and communicating related to eelgrass management and restoration. The selected contractor will stay up to date on these ongoing activities and work to incorporate their findings into this restoration program.

Project Tasks

1. Develop a Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP). This project will involve environmental data operations and therefore the contractor is responsible for developing the project QAPP and submitting it for review (see Quality Assurance & Quality Control Requirements on page seven).
2. Build or upgrade necessary infrastructure to initiate a large-scale eelgrass seed-based dispersal program.
3. Consult with State/Local Approvals for Proposed Restoration Methodology. As per the recommendations of the CT NERR White Paper, informally contact and gain approval from the following agency officials in the proper jurisdictions: 1) CT DEEP’s Land and Water Resource Division (East and West Regulatory Districts), and 2) NYSDEC Seagrass Coordinator in the Division of Marine Resources. Remain in contact with CT DEEP and NYSDEC throughout the project duration.
4. Complete three consecutive years of seed-based restoration and post-restoration monitoring in Long Island Sound. By the end of the third year of restoration, program should be able to support large-scale seed collection, processing, and dispersal (1 million seeds).
5. Develop a Seed Management Plan to document the program’s seed-dispersal process and help build capacity within the Long Island Sound and regionally.
6. Quarterly meetings with the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and Long Island Sound Eelgrass Collaborative to share progress and incorporate recommendations into the program.
7. Completion of quarterly and annual project status reports. These reports will be required to be provided to the NEIWPC Project Manager (see contact information in Section IX) for review. Delivery of reports on time and approval by NEIWPC oversight will be a condition of payment to the selected applicant.

Anticipated Project Meetings

Meeting Type	Purpose	Potential Participants
Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)	Project kick-off	Award Recipient and TAC
Quarterly Meeting with TAC	Update TAC on project status, report on challenges, any preliminary findings, and receive input from TAC on workplan implementation.	Contractor and TAC
Quarterly Long Island Sound Eelgrass Collaborative Meetings	Attend quarterly meetings to keep up to date on other eelgrass activities, share progress on program, and incorporate any feedback into the program where need be.	Contractor

Desired Outcome

The desired outcome is to develop and initiate a long-term and large-scale eelgrass seed dispersal restoration program in Long Island Sound. By the end of the project period, the program will be able to collect, process, and disperse 1 million seeds for eelgrass restoration, with emphasis on increasing genetic resiliency. An example description of the project’s outcomes, including environmental benefits to Long Island Sound, are listed below. Elements, outputs, and outcomes are taken from the LISS CCMP update found [here](#).

Table of Project Deliverables/Outputs and Environmental Outcomes					
LISS Program Element / Work Plan Activity	Project Deliverable/Output	Environmental Outcome	2020-2024 CCMP Update Actions	Percent of Time Spent on Activity	Target Date(s)
Thriving Habitats and Abundant Wildlife	Infrastructure Implementation/Upgrades (2025): Build or upgrade necessary infrastructure to initiate a large-scale eelgrass seed-based dispersal program.	2-1, 2-4	HW-2, HW-25	20	2025
Thriving Habitats and Abundant Wildlife	Monitoring: Year 1 (2026), Conduct seed-based restoration and post-restoration monitoring. Restoration and	2-1, 2-4	HW-1, HW-25	20	2026
Thriving Habitats and Abundant Wildlife	Monitoring: Year 2 (2027), Conduct seed-based restoration and post-restoration monitoring.	2-1, 2-4	HW-1, HW-25	20	2027
Thriving Habitats and Abundant Wildlife	Restoration and Monitoring: Year 3 (2028), Conduct seed-based* restoration and post-restoration monitoring. *	2-1, 2-4	HW-1, HW-25	20	2028*
Thriving Habitats and Abundant Wildlife	Education and Communication, Share restoration results broadly and regularly at meetings, conferences, and public events.	2-1, 2-4	HW-1, HW-25	10	Ongoing
Thriving Habitats and Abundant Wildlife	Seed Management Plan *	2-1, 2-4	HW-2, HW-25	10	2028*

*Note that existing funding goes through FY 2027, but NEIWPC and the project team may extend the funding into FY 2028 and are asking applicants to plan for this in their response to this RFP.

Relevant 2020-2024 CCMP Actions:

HW-1: Complete projects that result in restoration of coastal habitat.

HW-2: Develop a list of current and new or innovative restoration techniques.

HW-25: Continue Long Island Sound eelgrass abundance surveys and promote eelgrass management.

Relevant 2025 CCMP Actions (Revision pending):

HW 1-1: Restore coastal habitat by supporting projects that implement established restoration techniques or help validate innovative techniques and include broad collaboration and communication.

HW 1-3: *Survey, research, and monitor changes and associated causes in extent and abundance of coastal habitat types and their associated wildlife with focus on tidal wetlands and eelgrass.*

IV. General Guidelines for Applicants

Eligibility

Applicants who are eligible to submit proposals in response to this RFP include: federal (non-EPA), state, or local government agencies; interstate agencies; private non-profit organizations and institutions; for-profit organizations; and academic or educational institutions. Partnerships are allowed and encouraged.

Schedule

The project should take no more than 26 months, with all final reports and paperwork received by **June 30, 2027**. However, it is desirable for projects to be completed earlier.

The schedule* for this RFP is as follows:

Proposals Due to NEIWPC	February 28, 2025, 12:00 PM EST (noon)
Applicants Notified of Funding Decisions	March 14, 2025
Detailed Project Work Plans Due	March 28, 2025
Project Start Date	May 1, 2025
Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP)	To be completed prior to data collection activities.
Quarterly Reports due to NEIWPC	10th of the month following each quarter's close.
Final Report and Deliverables due to NEIWPC	June 30, 2027

*Schedule is subject to change.

Funding

There is approximately \$1,500,000 available for this project and it is anticipated that one successful project will be chosen. Proposals with budgets that exceed the identified funding cannot be considered. Awarded funds may be used for expenses specifically related to the proposed project, including wages and consultant fees. Expendable and non-expendable equipment directly related to the proposed project may qualify for funding, but requires pre-approval (prior to proposal submission) by NEIWPC and must be justified in the proposal. Indirect costs are allowed, but must be in line with the following procedures: Applicants with a valid Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement with their cognizant federal agency must use that rate, and must provide documentation of the negotiated rate. Applicants that do not have a Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement may charge a maximum indirect rate of 10 percent of direct costs.

Match

Applicants must provide a non-federal match that will equal or exceed 15 percent of requested funds. Funds from other federal sources or grants, and funds committed to match other federal grants, are not eligible to be used as matching funds.

Cost share or match can be satisfied with cash or in-kind services, or a combination of both. Cash contributions are those funds used to purchase goods or services associated with the project. In-kind contributions represent the value of non-cash contributions provided by the applicant. Any contributions must be clearly explained in the proposal and must be documented.

Deliverables

The primary deliverables for this project will be the following:

1. Approved Quality Assurance Project Plan (Task 1). See below for additional information about this deliverable.
2. Assessment of necessary infrastructure to be upgraded or built to support the initiation of the eelgrass seed dispersal program (Task 2).
3. Documentation of consultation and approval of the Proposed Restoration Method from CT DEEP LWRD and NYSDEC Division of Marine Resources (Task 3).
4. Three-years of seed-based restoration and post-restoration monitoring (Task 4).
5. Develop a Long Island Sound Eelgrass Seed Restoration Management Plan to serve as the project's final report, documenting the program's seed-dispersal processes and helping to build capacity within the Long Island Sound region (Task 5).
6. Attend quarterly TAC and Eelgrass Collaborative Meetings (Task 6).
7. Quarterly reports delivered to the NEIWPC project manager no later than the 10th day of January, April, July, and October during the duration of the project. Annual reports delivered to the NEIWPC project manager at the end of each year of seed-based restoration (Task 7).
8. At least five digital photos (highest resolution and size possible) of people participating in activities relating to the project.
9. Data collected under this agreement and project information must be submitted to the Long Island Sound metadata mapper. Existing projects already included in the mapper should check the project's metadata for completeness and submit corrections if needed. In addition, discrete water quality data must be submitted to the Water Quality Exchange (WQX; <https://www.epa.gov/waterdata/water-quality-data>). Other types of data must be stored in an open-access repository. The dataset should be assigned a persistent web address such as a DOI that is submitted to the LIS metadata mapper to enable data discovery and access by LISS partners and the public.

All deliverables are to be submitted in draft form in Microsoft Word format for review by project partners and approval by the project manager (See Contact Information in Section IX). All final reports are to be delivered in Adobe .pdf format upon approval by the project manager.

Quality Assurance & Quality Control Requirements

The NEIWPC Quality Management Plan requires that Quality Assurance Project Plans (QAPPs) are developed and approved for all projects involving environmental information operations (i.e., collection, analysis, and/or manipulation of environmental data). For projects that involve environmental information operations, the contractor will be responsible for developing the project QAPP and submitting it to EPA and NEIWPC staff for review after the start of the contract period. NEIWPC will provide guidelines for QAPP development. The QAPP must be approved by the EPA, the NEIWPC Project Manager, and the NEIWPC Quality Assurance Program Manager prior to any information collection or analysis. If your proposed project will include environmental information operations, development of the QAPP can be completed as a task under this project and should be included in the proposal narrative, timeline, and budget. While preparing your proposal, please account for the additional time and resources necessary for QAPP development. Allow a minimum of 30 days for the development of your QAPP and 90 days for the review and approval of your QAPP by NEIWPC and EPA QA officers. It is appropriate for an applicant to utilize or build upon an existing, relevant, approved QAPP if one exists.

For more information about QAPPs, see [NEIWPC's Quality Management Program](#) and [EPA's Quality Assurance Plan Standard](#).

Questions regarding the QAPP process or the necessity of a QAPP for a proposed project should be directed to the NEIWPCC Project Manager (see contact information in Section IX) by **February 21, 2025**.

Deliverables, Ownership, and Credit Due

All materials, software, maps, studies, reports, and other products or data, regardless of physical form or characteristics, produced as a result of this solicitation and funded, in whole or in part, under an agreement with NEIWPCC shall be made available to NEIWPCC, LISS, and the U.S. EPA in the formats in which it is stored or maintained. NEIWPCC, LISS, and the U.S. EPA 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, software, maps, reports, and other products or data without the express, written consent of NEIWPCC and subject to any other approvals required by state or federal law. Reports and other deliverables will credit NEIWPCC, LISS, and U.S. EPA for any work completed under the grant award.

Geographic Information System (GIS) Data Requirements

GIS data produced under this project must adhere to the requirements of [EPA's Data Management Policy, Standards, and Procedures](#). Specifically, the selected contractor must provide documentation for all produced data, including source information for each digital data layer (i.e., scale and accuracy, map projection, coordinate system, etc.), and specific information about the data layer itself (i.e., 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 [here](#). Specific technical guidance on geospatial deliverables and acceptable formats can be found [here](#). GIS data produced under this project will be submitted to NEIWPCC as a deliverable.

Insurance Requirements

Prior to the start of work, NEIWPCC requires its contractors to procure and maintain, at their sole cost and expense, General Liability, Automobile, Workers' Compensation insurance and, if required by state law, Disability Benefits coverage. Please note that NEIWPCC's insurance specifications are required elements of NEIWPCC's contracts. Please review the insurance specifications carefully before you decide whether to apply for this funding opportunity. If you cannot provide proof of insurance, do not apply for this funding opportunity.

V. Proposal Requirements

Proposals must include a (1) cover letter, (2) title page with abstract, (3) narrative with citations, (4) timeline, (5) budgets (both overall and task-based budget formats), (6) budget justification, (7) description of qualifications, and (8) letters of commitment or support. Page limits for each of these components are provided in the individual descriptions below. Proposals that do not contain all of the information requested and/or do not meet the format requirements will be eliminated from consideration. Pages that exceed the maximum number specified for each section will not be reviewed.

Cover Letter

Please include a one-page cover letter, printed on official letterhead and signed by an authorized representative of the lead agency, firm, or institution, with each proposal. The cover letter must state that:

- You are applying for funds under this program.
- You commit to the match you are proposing.
- You acknowledge that funding is provided per a task-based schedule for tasks completed.

Title Page

The title page must adhere to the format provided in Appendix A and include all of the following information, using a maximum of one single-spaced, one-sided, typed 8.5" x 11" page with 11-point font and 1-inch margins:

- **Project Name:** Use the exact project name as it appears throughout the proposal.
- **Organization:** Provide the organization name.
- **Primary Investigator Name and Contact Information:** Provide the name, title, and affiliation of the primary investigator, as well as mailing address, phone number, and email address.
- **Financial Contact Name and Contact Information (if applicable):** Provide the name, title, and affiliation of the individual responsible for financial/contractual negotiations (if different from primary investigator), as well as mailing address, phone number, and email address.
- **Project Partners (if any):** Provide the names, titles, affiliations, for each of the additional investigators or support staff who will significantly contribute to the project (if any).
- **Funds Requested:** Provide the amount of money you are requesting from NEIWPC for the project.
- **Matching Funds:** Provide the amount of matching funds you and/or your partners will be contributing to the project (if any).
- **Federal Tax Identification Number (FID)**
- **Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) Number:** All eligible U.S. applicants must have a Unique Entity Identifier ("UEI") number. Contractors can obtain an UEI through [the System for Award Management \(SAM\)](#). This SAM-generated number will become the official identifier for doing business with the U.S. Government and NEIWPC.¹
- **Certified Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE):** Indicate if your organization is a DBE.
- **Project Location Description (City, State):** Provide the state and city where of the primary location where work will be completed.
- **Project Location Coordinates (Latitude, Longitude):** Provide the latitude and longitude coordinates for the primary location where work will be completed.
- **Abstract:** The abstract must accurately describe the project being proposed and include: (1) the objectives of the project, (2) the methodology to be used, and (3) the expected outputs and outcomes of the project and how it addresses this RFP, including environmental benefits to Long Island Sound Study. **The abstract must fit within the title page.**

Proposal Narrative

The proposal narrative must not exceed ten consecutively numbered, single-spaced, typed 8.5" x 11" pages with 11-point font and 1-inch margins. The 10-page narrative must include all of the following information:

- **Problem Description:** Briefly describe the project and its relevance to the Thriving Habitats and Abundant Wildlife goal of the LISS CCMP and eelgrass meadow restoration efforts in the Long Island Sound estuary. This section can also include brief background or introductory information.
- **Objectives:** Outline how the project will achieve the goal of this RFP.
- **Methodology:** Outline the project's design and describe the methods and techniques that will be used to meet the project's goal and tasks.
- **Expected outputs and outcomes:** Describe the project's expected outputs and outcomes, and list and describe each of the specific deliverables and end-products.
- Briefly discuss the **process to be used to evaluate the effectiveness and success** of the project.
- **Roles and Responsibilities:** Define the roles and responsibilities of all project participants.
- **Citations:** Include references as appropriate within the proposal narrative.

¹ In April 2022, the federal government will stop using the DUNS number to uniquely identify entities registered in the System. All NEIWPC Contractors will be required, as part of the contract process, to submit their UEI as part of the agreement process. The DUNS number will no longer be used as a unique entity identifier and only the Sam.gov created number will be accepted.

Timeline

Provide a detailed timeline for meeting identified tasks and completing deliverables, with a completion date no later than **June 30, 2027**. All timelines should be stated in terms of Month #1, #2, #4, etc. rather than specific dates, e.g. "March 5, 2025." Although the project start date is anticipated to be on or about **June 30, 2027**, this date may change based on the time the actual agreement is established. The timeline must be no more than one 8.5" x 11" page with 1" margins and 11-point font.

Budget

The project budget must be provided in two formats:

First, provide a complete, detailed budget using the format provided in Appendix B. The budget must be no more than one 8.5" x 11" page with 1" margins and 11-point font. Along with this budget, provide a brief justification (one page maximum) for the proposed costs in terms of meeting project objectives. Include an explanation of how indirect costs are calculated. Justify subcontracts, if any. Identify and describe current and pending financial resources (including the source) for non-federal cost share or matching funds that are intended to support the project. Entities intending to use a Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate must provide documentation of their rate. This documentation does not count toward the page limit.

Second, prepare a budget that is broken down by project tasks, as shown in Appendix C. For your convenience, an electronic version of the budget form is available at <http://neiwpsc.org/about-us/working-with-neiwpsc/>. As you develop this budget, keep in mind that contractual payments will be made based on this budget. This budget must be no more than two 8.5" x 11" pages with 1" margins and 11-point font. Matching funds should not be included in the task-based budget.

Qualifications

All applicants must designate a team leader and submit, as part of their team qualifications, a resume for the team leader and additional technical support staff showing level of experience and educational background.

The applicant chosen for this project should possess the academic and/or professional expertise and certifications in the relevant subject areas and have a strong track record in delivering projects of this nature and facilitating successful working relationships with municipal, state, and federal government. Applicants must be able to demonstrate extensive experience in eelgrass meadows, habitat restoration and post-monitoring, the physical conditions and biota of the Long Island Sound, and program development. Applicants should have experience and capacity to conduct and manage effective public meetings. Attention to detail in documenting qualifications that meet the scoring requirements is strongly advised. The qualifications section, including resumes, CVs, descriptions of past projects, etc. must not exceed 3 pages.

Letters of Support

Projects undertaken in partnership with other organizations, particularly where the partner will provide a service or action, must include support letters from each partner stating their specific commitments. If your project includes matching funds and the match is to be provided by partners, letters of commitment for the match from those partners must be included. General "letters of support" should not be included with the application.

Justice, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

NEIWPC and LISS are committed to advancing justice, diversity, equity, and inclusion across our work. Proposals demonstrating benefits to environmental justice communities will be given additional weight during

the proposal evaluation process. Please review the [LISS Environmental Justice Work Group](#) webpage for more information as well as links to additional resources.

VI. Submission Process

Proposals must be submitted by no later than **12:00pm (noon) on February 28, 2025**. No late submissions will be considered. Applicants **must submit their proposals electronically** through the NEIWPC website. Unless prior approval is given, proposals received through e-mail, postal delivery, or any other delivery method will not be accepted.

To submit your proposal, go to <http://neiwpc.org/about-us/working-with-neiwpc/contractor-proposal-submissions/> and follow the instructions provided for uploading your file(s). It is highly preferred that the proposal and all supporting information are submitted as a single PDF document. This requires Adobe Acrobat or similar Adobe product (the free Adobe Reader does not allow the conversion of documents into PDF format), or a scanner. If multiple files are to be submitted, you will need to create an archive file (.zip, or .rar) containing all of the files you wish to submit. The file name should be in the following format: "NEIWPC-LISS Eelgrass NAME OF YOUR ORGANIZATION." Once you have clicked the "submit" button, please allow adequate time for your submission to process and do not hit the back button or close your browser window. The process is not considered complete until you have reached the confirmation page. If submitted successfully, you will receive an email from NEIWPC (mail@neiwpc.org) with the subject line "RFP Submission Confirmation" confirming your submission. For questions regarding submission of proposals, contact Alex DuMont, NEIWPC Project Manager, at adumont@neiwpc.org or 978-349-2526.

VII. Proposal Evaluation Process

NEIWPC will screen all proposals to ensure that they meet all requirements of this RFP. If a proposal is found to be incomplete, the proposal will be eliminated from the competition and NEIWPC will notify the applicant. To be considered complete, proposals must include all of components described in Section V. Proposal Requirements. Pages more than the limits specified for each component will not be reviewed. Complete and eligible proposals will be reviewed by a panel composed of scientists and managers from NEIWPC and LISS partner agencies. Proposals may also be submitted for external peer reviews. The review team will evaluate the proposals based upon the following criteria:

1. **Addresses Desired Outcome (0-25 points)**. Degree to which the proposal can accomplish the desired outcomes. Clarity and measurability of deliverables/outputs within specific and reasonable time frame(s), including relationship of expected results/benefits to addressing this RFP's topic and improving management of LIS. Potential to advance justice, diversity, equity and inclusion across LIS.
2. **Technical Merit (0-20 points)**. Adequacy of the proposed methodology, project design, and/or technical approach to accomplish stated project objectives. If appropriate, inclusion of a technically valid, specific performance assessment plan describing measurement and reporting of outputs and outcomes.
3. **Performance Capability (0-15 points)**. Ability of the applicant to accomplish the proposed project given its history of past performance, experience, qualifications, facilities, and resources.
4. **Appropriate and Cost-Effective Budget (0-15 points)**. Proposals with costs up to \$1,500,000 will be considered, but cost and the relative value of work products will be a factor in evaluating submissions. Adequacy of the proposed budget to accomplish objectives, and adequacy of justification in explaining the need for resources for this project. If reviewing similar projects, is this project cost-effective compared with other similar projects under review? Indication of leveraged funds from other organizations. Provision of matching non-federal funds.

5. **Transferability of Results to Similar Projects and/or Dissemination to the Public (0-10 points).** Degree of transferability of data or project results to the LISS program partners. If applicable, inclusion of a public outreach or public education component that documents and/or distributes results of the project to the appropriate audience or summarizes data for LISS distribution.
6. **Collaboration, Communication, and Capacity (0-15 points).** Degree to which the project builds upon existing efforts and builds capacity. Proposals that generate additional capacity for seed development, transport, storage, and dispersal will be ranked higher. Demonstration of knowledge of similar efforts occurring in the watershed and an ability to collaborate and coordinate with LIS partners and stakeholders, including the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation and Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection.

Proposals will be ranked and evaluated based upon the review teams' recommendations, external peer reviews, and the relative priority of commitments in LISS CCMP. Award notification is expected by **March 14, 2025**.

VIII. Notification of Awards

Award notification to applicants is expected by **March 14, 2025**. Award recipients may be asked to submit a revised work plan, timeline, and budget at this time. Projects cannot start until the contract is signed by both parties and all mandatory documentation, including proof of General Liability Insurance and Worker's Compensation, is received by NEIWPC. If your project includes environmental data operations, this work may not begin until the QAPP is approved. NEIWPC will not pay for expenses incurred prior to the contract start date. Payment for costs incurred will be on a reimbursement basis per the contract payment schedule and contingent upon completion of quarterly progress reports and project deliverables.

IX. Contacts

NEIWPC and LISS will accept questions about this RFP by email or phone through Close of Business (COB) **February 21, 2025**.

For information regarding the application process, contact **Alex DuMont**, the NEIWPC Project Manager:

Alex DuMont
NEIWPC
650 Suffolk Street, Suite 410
Lowell, MA 01854
978-349-2526
adumont@neiwpc.org

For information regarding the RFP topic, contact **Cayla Sullivan (sullivan.cayla@epa.gov)**

Appendix B: Overall Budget Format

PROJECT BUDGET		
BUDGET CATEGORY <i>(Add/remove itemizing lines below major categories as necessary, but do NOT delete major categories)</i>	MATCH	GRANT REQUEST
A. PERSONNEL (list individual names and titles below)	\$	\$
	\$	\$
	\$	\$
	\$	\$
B. FRINGE BENEFITS _____% of _____ (e.g., 10% of total personnel costs) TOTAL:	\$	\$
C. TRAVEL (estimate number/purpose of trips below)	\$	\$
	\$	\$
	\$	\$
D. EQUIPMENT (itemize below) TOTAL:	\$	\$
	\$	\$
	\$	\$
E. SUPPLIES (itemize below) TOTAL:	\$	\$
	\$	\$
	\$	\$
F. CONTRACTS (identify & itemize below) TOTAL:	\$	\$
	\$	\$
	\$	\$
G. OTHER (identify & itemize below) TOTAL:	\$	\$
	\$	\$
	\$	\$
H. TOTAL DIRECT COSTS (SUM OF A-G)	\$	\$
I. INDIRECT COSTS _____% of _____ (e.g., 10% of total direct costs) TOTAL:	\$	\$
J. TOTAL PROJECT COST (SUM OF H+I)	\$	\$

APPENDIX C: Task-Based Budget Format

Cost	Task Number	Task Name	Expected Date of Completion