



REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Independent Evaluation of the Long Island Sound Futures Fund Program

OVERVIEW

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) seeks a qualified Contractor for an independent evaluation of the Long Island Sound Futures Fund Program (LISFF). [The Long Island Sound Futures Fund](#) supports projects to fully restore the health and living resources of Long Island Sound. It operates within a partnership of federal and state agencies, foundations, non-governmental organizations, educational institutions, user groups, and individuals dedicated to restoring and protecting the Sound. It contributes to [NFWF's Northeast Watersheds Business Plan](#).

BACKGROUND

Stretching more than 110 miles into the Atlantic, with 600 miles of coastline, the Long Island Sound is an estuary that provides economic and recreational benefits to millions of people while also providing habitat for more than 1,200 invertebrates, 170 species of fish and dozens of species of migratory birds. All 9 million people who live, work, and play in the watershed impacting the Sound can benefit from and help build on the progress that has already been made to restore its health and living resources.

The LISFF envisions a Sound with clean, clear waters, safe to swim in and charged with life. It is a vision of waters nourished and protected by extensive coastal wetlands, by publicly accessible, litter-free beaches and preserves, and of undeveloped islands. It is a vision of abundant and diverse wildlife, of flourishing commercial fisheries, of harbors accessible to the boating community and of a regional consciousness and a way of life that protects and sustains the ecosystem.

The LISFF supports efforts to test innovative approaches to conservation, deliver transformative projects and support people and communities who value the Sound and take a direct role in its future. Funding priorities for this program in the evaluation period include:

- **Clean Waters and Healthy Watersheds:** Improving water quality by reducing pollution from the waters that flow into and the land which surrounds the Sound.
- **Thriving Habitats and Abundant Wildlife:** Restoring coastal habitats to maintain resilience and function and to support populations of fish, birds and wildlife; and sustain the ecological balance of the Sound in a healthy, productive and resilient state for the benefit of people, wildlife and the natural environment.
- **Sustainable and Resilient Communities:** Supporting vibrant, informed, and engaged communities that use, appreciate, and help protect and sustain the Sound

Launched in 2005, LISFF has invested \$68 million in 650 projects. This has been leveraged by \$73.3 million in matching contributions from grantees for a total conservation impact of \$141.3 million. The projects have reduced 111,235 pounds of nitrogen from entering the sound, restored 862 acres of fish and wildlife habitat, treated 212.5 million gallons of stormwater pollution and engaged five million people in protecting and restoring the Sound.

SCOPE OF WORK

The scope of this contract is for an independent evaluation of the LISFF Program and the grants it awarded following the decision to prioritize collaboration and partnerships from 2014-2024. Approximately 368 grants and nearly \$56 million were awarded during this period. NFWF has drafted a set of questions for the evaluation. The Contractor will be responsible for finalizing the evaluation questions, with NFWF's input and approval. The Contractor should propose a technical approach for conducting the evaluation that clearly describes robust and appropriate methods for answering these questions.

Draft Evaluation Questions:

LISFF program strategy: To what extent is the LISFF program strategically coherent, sound and supportive of greater watershed efforts?

Question 1. To what extent do grantee projects align with the broader conservation goals and mission of the LISFF program and the Long Island Sound Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP)?

Question 2. What have been the LISFF's unique contributions and role within the network of Long Island Sound stewardship and management agencies?

Question 3. What opportunities are there for LISFF to grow with the new CCMP?

Program implementation – To what extent is the LISFF program being implemented effectively?

Question 4. Which factors significantly aid the achievement of grantee outputs? How effective is the LISFF project selection process at selecting successful projects? What are the variables that make a successful grantee/project?

Question 5. Which factors may limit project impact and recipient performance?

Question 6. How can grantee project metrics be made more useful? What performance-based project metrics are best suited for measuring the impact of key LISFF conservation strategies?

Question 7. Do multi-year grantees show evidence of adaptive management or strategic learning?

Question 8. The LISFF "portfolio" of projects is broad and diverse. Which types of activities stand out as less impactful or frequently perform below the proposed outcomes?

Question 9. Are the LISFF funding allotments adequate to maximize project benefits?

Question 10. Which components or procedures within the LISFF program are the most effective, and which could be improved?

Program results – How does LISFF contribute to improvements in the environmental health and status of Long Island Sound?

Question 11. Do current efforts direct investments efficiently and to the most impactful projects? Given observed outcomes and funding patterns, where might future investments be most prudently directed in order to maximize conservation impacts in Long Island Sound?

Question 12. What does the LISFF bring to the region that wasn't there before or is not currently supplied by other programs?

Question 13. How has the LISFF program enhanced the Long Island Sound Program?

Question 14. Do grantee outputs link convincingly to identified longer-term environmental/conservation outcomes?

Question 15. How effective is the grant-making process in terms of building long-term grantee capacity?

Question 16. What is the potential for LISFF investments to be sustained?

REQUIRED EXPERTISE AND PROPOSED STAFF

The successful contractor must have significant expertise evaluating environmental or wildlife conservation programs, as outlined below. Joint proposals from a prime and sub-contractor are welcome but please note that only one contract will be awarded for this project.

- The Lead Evaluator should have 10 + years of experience in evaluation study design and implementation, including experience using the research methods proposed for this evaluation.
- The proposed team's prior work should include evaluations of grantmaking and environmental or wildlife conservation programs.
- Expertise in organizational development and collaborative, partnership, and network-based approaches to advancing environmental and wildlife conservation.
- Experience working with federal, state, and local governmental agencies, conservation districts and nongovernmental organizations involved with conservation is required.
- Expertise in presenting complex information clearly and concisely to a non-technical audience in writing and verbally must be demonstrated.
- Ability to adhere to contract timeline and budgets must be demonstrated.
- Experience conducting and disseminating research involving humans as subjects is required.
- Education and training at the Masters or PhD level required for the Lead Evaluator and members of the team who are leading evaluation tasks.

CRITERIA FOR COMPETITIVE APPLICATIONS

Proposals will be evaluated and scored on the following criteria. Offerors should organize their Proposal Narrative based on these sections:

1. **Understanding of the Scope of Work.** The Scope of Work must demonstrate an understanding of the goals of the activities involved. This section should include a description of how you will communicate with NFWF and program stakeholders and report on progress, results, and deliverables. Weight: 10%
2. **Technical Approach.** The proposed technical approach for conducting the evaluation should clearly describe the proposed methods necessary to conduct the project. The section must demonstrate that those methods are robust and appropriate for conducting the evaluation and address any areas of complexity or uncertainty associated with the evaluation questions. Weight: 20%

3. **Qualifications of Proposed Personnel.** This section should clearly describe which tasks each member of the team will conduct and how their training and experience provide the requisite experience to do so successfully. Weight: 20%
4. **Contractor's Past Performance.** The proposal should include information on the primary investigator(s)'s past performance experience in environmental and/or conservation program evaluation. List recent (last 2-5 years) accomplishments and previous services related to the technical expertise offered. If subcontractors are to be used, information should be provided that demonstrates their past performance as well. Describe how that past performance is applicable to this evaluation.
Weight: 20%
5. **Budget.** The proposed budget should itemize work in sufficient detail to enable reviewers to evaluate the appropriateness of the entire funding request. You must use attached [Contractor Budget Template](#). You may add columns to the template for additional tasks if needed, but should not make any other changes. If applicable, please include the proposed budget for equipment purchase in the proposal separate from the Contractor Budget Template. Weight: 30%

ELIGIBLE OFFERORS & CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

Eligible applicants include institutions of higher education, other nonprofits, commercial organizations, international organizations, and local, state and Indian tribal governments.

By submitting a proposal in response to this solicitation, the offeror warrants and represents that it does not currently have any apparent or actual conflict of interest, as described herein. In the event an offeror currently has, will have during the life of the contemplated contract, or becomes aware of an apparent or actual conflict of interest, in the event an award is made, the offeror must notify NFWF in writing in the proposal, or in subsequent correspondence (if the issue becomes known after the submission of the proposal) of such apparent or actual conflicts of interest, including organizational conflicts of interest. Conflicts of interest include any relationship or matter which might place the contractor, the contractor's employees, or the contractor's subcontractors in a position of conflict, real or apparent, between their responsibilities under the award and any other outside interests, or otherwise. Conflicts of interest may also include, but are not limited to, direct or indirect financial interests, close personal relationships, positions of trust in outside organizations, consideration of future employment arrangements with a different organization, or decision-making affecting the award that would cause a reasonable person with knowledge of the relevant facts to question the impartiality of the offeror, the offeror's employees, or the offeror's future subcontractors in the matter. Upon receipt of such a notice, the NFWF Contracting Officer will determine if a conflict of interest exists and, if so, if there are any possible actions to be taken by the offeror to reduce or resolve the conflict. Failure to resolve conflicts of interest in a manner that satisfies NFWF may result in the proposal not being selected for award.

By submitting a proposal in response to this solicitation, the Offeror warrants and represents that it is eligible for award of a Contract resulting from this solicitation and that it is not subject to any of the below circumstances:

Has any unpaid Federal tax liability that has been assessed, for which all judicial and administrative remedies have been exhausted or have lapsed, and that is not being paid in a timely manner pursuant



to an Contract with the authority responsible for collecting the tax liability, where the awarding agency is aware of the unpaid tax liability, unless the agency has considered suspension or debarment of the corporation and made a determination that this further action is not necessary to protect the interests of the Government; or

Was convicted (or had an officer or agent of such corporation acting on behalf of the corporation convicted) of a felony criminal violation under any Federal or State law within the preceding 24 months, where the awarding agency is aware of the conviction, unless the agency has considered suspension or debarment of the corporation and made a determination that this further action is not necessary to protect the interests of the Government; or

Is listed on the General Services Administration's, government-wide System for Award Management Exclusions (SAM Exclusions), in accordance with the OMB guidelines at 2 C.F.R Part 180 that implement E.O.s 12549 (3 C.F.R., 1986 Comp., p. 189) and 12689 (3 C.F.R., 1989 Comp., p. 235), "Debarment and Suspension," or intends to enter into any subaward, contract or other Contract using funds provided by NFWF with any party listed on the SAM Exclusions in accordance with Executive Orders 12549 and 12689. The SAM Exclusions instructions can be found here: <https://www.sam.gov/SAM/>

SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

Proposals must be submitted under the same cover at the same time, in three distinctly labeled and separate documents: 1) Technical Proposal, 2) Budget, and 3) Evidence of Financial Stability. Interested parties should submit proposals electronically to NFWF (Victoria Moreno, Program Coordinator, Victoria.Moreno@nfwf.org) using the requirements below:

1. Technical Proposal

- Format: Proposals must be provided in Word format or searchable PDF with a font size no smaller than 11 pt.
- Contact information: Primary contact person, company name, address, phone, email, website, DUNS number, and EIN/Taxpayer ID#.
- Narrative: Concise (10-page limit) description of the work plan and a summary of the applicant's expertise and experience, organized by the Criteria for Competitive Applications.
- Biographies: Resumes and/or Vitae of key staff and their role in the proposed work area.
- References: List two clients who have received services from the applicant that is similar in nature to the proposed work; include names, phone numbers, and email address.

2. Budget: The budget proposal must be submitted using the following NFWF budget template found [here](#).

3. Evidence of Financial Stability: The applicant shall provide proof of financial stability in the form of financial statements, credit ratings, a line of credit, or other financial arrangements sufficient to demonstrate the applicant's capability to meet the requirements of this solicitation.

4. Example Report: Evaluation report on a similar topic prepared by the proposed team.



SELECTION PROCEDURE

A panel of NFWF staff will review the proposals. Offerors may be asked to modify objectives, work plans, or budgets prior to final approval of the award. Only one award will be made for this project. If multiple institutions are involved, they should be handled through subcontracts.

COMPLIANCE WITH APPLICABLE LAWS

NFWF is committed to operating in full compliance with all applicable laws, regulations, and Executive Orders. We continuously monitor legal and regulatory developments to ensure our policies, procedures, and operations align with current federal directives. We encourage all applicants to do the same.

The ability and extent to which NFWF is able to make awards is contingent upon receipt of funds from federal agencies and/or other funding partners. Final funding decisions will be made based on the applications received and the level and timing of funding received by NFWF.

SUBMISSION DEADLINES

October 14th, 2025	Deadline for questions about the solicitation to NFWF. Offerors should submit questions regarding this solicitation via email to Victoria Moreno, Program Coordinator, Victoria.Moreno@nfwf.org . NFWF will post all the questions and responses to all questions so that all offerors have access to them at the same time. In order to provide equitable responses, all questions must be sent to NFWF no later than 5:00 PM EDT October 14th, 2025
October 15th, 2025	NFWF will post the questions submitted regarding the solicitation and responses on the NFWF website at https://www.nfwf.org/programs/long-island-sound-futures-fund .
November 7th, 2025	Deadline for receipt by NFWF of proposals. Proposals must be sent electronically as an email attachment to Victoria Moreno, Program Coordinator, Victoria.Moreno@nfwf.org by 5:00 PM EDT November 7th, 2025 . Proposals must be provided in Word format or searchable PDF.
December 2025	Contract award to selected Offeror
January 2026	Deliverables Due