2027-2028
LONG ISLAND SOUND PARTNERSHIP RESEARCH GRANT PROGRAM
CALL FOR PRELIMINARY PROPOSALS

OPENING DATE: January 15, 2026
CLOSING DATE: March 19, 2026

Informational Webinars: 1 pm, Friday, January 23, 2026
https://stonybrook.zoom.us/j/94394423396?pwd=ovQ5Gua34M92CdNoKbAXBU1c6by8I7.1
and 11 am, Thursday, January 29, 2026
https://stonybrook.zoom.us/j/95100355006?pwd=2EaAB9A8lztIhbSqli66ftuhj6fnuX.1&jst=3

Connecticut Sea Grant (CTSG) and New York Sea Grant (NYSG) announce the Long Island Sound (LIS) Partnership extramural research program. The intent of this program is to fund research that will support the science-based management of Long Island Sound (LIS) and its resources, and support implementation of the Long Island Sound Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP). The LIS Partnership is a regional, community-based partnership to protect and restore LIS. Information on the LIS Partnership can be obtained at https://lispartnership.org/.

Preliminary proposals are invited for the funding period of January 1, 2027, to December 31, 2028. Any investigator seeking support for this period (for either one or two years) must submit a preliminary proposal via NYSG's eSea Grant submission website at http://www.nyseagrant.org/eseagrant (account registration required) **by 5:00 p.m. EDT on Thursday, March 19, 2026.** Hard copy, email, and fax submissions will NOT be accepted.

Subject to available federal funding, up to approximately $5.5 million is expected to be available for one- or two-year projects, with a maximum funding level of $1,000,000 ($500,000/year cap). The first year of the funding period covered by this Call for Preliminary Proposals is expected to begin on January 1, 2027. Allocation of Year 2 funds, if applicable, will be contingent on satisfactory progress in Year 1, and availability of federal funding. Projects chosen for funding require the completion and approval of a Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP) before initiation of data collection.

1. **Topic Areas**

The purpose of this Call is to *support **actionable** research that produces and integrates information that fills identified gaps in our understanding and extends the ability of managers and other end users to make informed decisions and/or take appropriate management actions to prevent, reduce, or mitigate anthropogenic stressors and enhance the health and sustainability of the Sound.* This is best accomplished by engaging early with end users of the anticipated products/outcomes of the research project (see below). Please note, clearly defined relevance and application to management are required and must be explicitly described and detailed in the proposal.

Topic areas must address one or more of the four goals of the 2025 LIS Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP), which is available at https://lispartnership.org/2025/06/2025-comprehensive-conservation-and-management-plan-ccmp/.

Applicants **must EXPLICITLY** specify which **CCMP Goal(s), Objective(s), and Action(s)** the project will address. A vague listing of or references to those priorities without an effective explanation of how the proposed work will specifically address the **Goal-> Objective -> Action(s)** will not be deemed sufficient. Proposals that also specify how they support **crosscutting connections** are encouraged.

For the purposes of this RFP, research is defined as natural and/or social scientific endeavors with **explicit and testable hypotheses** that strive to answer "why" and "how" questions. Proposals that focus primarily on model development and/or synthesis efforts must also be hypothesis driven. **Those that seek to describe or monitor conditions and do not identify or test a specific hypothesis will not be considered**.

Proposals must explicitly link hypotheses to data collection and analytical methods proposed, that is, the PI must establish how the proposed research will provide evidence to test the hypotheses laid out.

This Call encourages the submission of large-scale research proposals that combine topic areas or themes, embrace interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary approaches, or involve multiple partners to produce particularly impactful actionable, management-relevant products. Consideration of crosscutting connections might be particularly of relevance to consider for these larger projects. Research outputs should provide explanations, models, or tools to understand and forecast the response of LIS to stressors and describe how the outputs will directly support, as well as how they will be made available to support management measures to prevent, reduce, or mitigate these stressors.

2. Underline End Users

The project must **engage end users** from the beginning and throughout the project. An end user is defined as an individual or group of individuals in a position to apply the information or tools being produced, evaluated, or transferred through a research project in a way that is of direct consequence to the ecological, social, or economic integrity of LIS and/or surrounding watershed(s) and communities. Examples of end users include, but are not limited to, municipal, state or federal government, private, or non-governmental decision/policy makers, including landowners, resource managers, land use planners, businesses (such as fisheries or aquaculture), and educators at all levels.

Pre-proposals must identify the likely end users that would benefit from this research and briefly describe the mutual benefits of collaboration. Applicants must also clearly identify the **actionable information, tools, or outputs** to be produced by the research, and how they will be delivered for actionable/ applied use. More details and a letter of support from end users will be encouraged in

full proposals. Submissions that merely state that the information generated has value to managers, without adequate elaboration, will not be competitive. Applicants should consider involving the end users/beneficiaries early in the process. Colleagues in federal, state or local government agencies, NGOs and/or Sea Grant extension professionals may be able to assist in identifying potential end users.

3. Duration and Funding

At this time and subject to federal funding, the program anticipates awarding approximately $5,500,000 to cover the entire duration of all selected projects. The projects can be either one- or two-year projects. Proposals of any amount are welcome up to a **maximum funding level of $1,000,000 ($500,000/year cap) and this must include all direct plus indirect costs.** Proposals over $250,000/year must utilize interdisciplinary approaches to complex problems, involve interdisciplinary collaborative research teams, and produce outputs with the potential for high impact, and this should be clearly described in the proposals. Proposals that exceed the maximum amount will not be reviewed.

Match Requirements: This funding Call requires that proposals include at least a 50% non-federal funds match to their requested award, i.e., $1 in non-federal match for every $2 of federal funds requested. More details will be provided in the full proposal guidance.

4. Eligibility

Pre-proposals from the following eligible categories will be considered for funding:
  A. Faculty at universities and colleges,
  B. Researchers at not-for-profit institutions,
  C. Researchers who are personnel of state or local agencies, and
  D. Researchers at for-profit institutions or companies.

Eligibility is not limited to individuals from New York and Connecticut, but projects must be related to Long Island Sound. Applicants' (PIs, co-PIs and collaborators) primary affiliation must be at a U.S. institution. Federal employees and institutions are not eligible to receive compensation, equipment, or budgeted items of any sort, but federal employees can serve as co-PIs, or associate investigators. NYSG and CTSG staff cannot serve as principal investigators (PIs), co-PIs, or associate investigators, and are not eligible to receive funding. Students cannot serve as principal investigators (PIs), co-PIs, or associate investigators. Members of the LIS Partnership Science and Technical Advisory Committee (STAC) may serve as PIs or co-PIs and may receive funding under this initiative, provided they meet the other criteria above.

5. Review

All pre-proposals that meet all specified requirements will be screened by a panel established by CTSG and NYSG that will include scientific peers from unaffiliated institutions and representatives from CTSG, NYSG, EPA, NYSDEC, and CTDEEP. **Note that the largest evaluative component in the pre-proposal review process is the management/policy relevance and actionability of the research and outputs.** The Panel will use the following criteria, scoring, and

weighting in rating pre-proposals:

A. Engagement of end users, and usefulness of the anticipated results, as described in the submission, to inform and advance management of LIS and its resources (40%)

B. Rationale and alignment to the CCMP (30%)

C. Likelihood that the project will be successful in fulfilling its objectives, including hypotheses, soundness of the proposed approach, and qualifications of the PIs (30%).

Pre-proposals will be ranked on their average total scores. Each panelist will score a preproposal that combines the three criteria (max 10 possible score) and the combined scores will be averaged across all the panelists. Full proposals will be encouraged only by those prospective principal investigators with the highest-ranked preliminary proposals. Each lead investigator will receive a summary of the Panel comments for their pre-proposal. Subject to federal funding, at this time we anticipate approximately $5,500,000 to be available but note that there is no *a priori* projection or target for the number of proposals that will ultimately be supported. Full proposal guidance will be provided to the PIs for those proposals that are encouraged to submit.

6. Preliminary Proposal Requirements

A preliminary proposal, while not as detailed as a full proposal, should clearly and succinctly define the objectives, approach, and rationale for the project. The anticipated benefits (i.e., the usefulness) of the proposed work must also be adequately described. This entails specifically explaining how the proposed work will contribute to the management of Long Island Sound and implementation of the CCMP and identifying the **end users** who will be targeted for engagement as part of the proposal. **General statements simply expressing that there will be value in the information generated from the proposed research will not be competitive**.

Pre-proposals requesting funding that is complementary to that sought from other sponsors are welcome. In this case, the other funding sources and amounts should be disclosed, and the work being funded or proposed elsewhere should be distinguished from, and not duplicative of, the work proposed under this Call. The proposed work should also be distinct from and not duplicative of ongoing or recent projects funded by the LIS Partnership or other entities.

All preliminary proposals must be submitted using the format and categories described at the end of this announcement. No appendices, other attachments, or web links are permitted. Investigators should ensure that all information is provided and that pre-proposal components follow the specified format.

The preliminary proposal project description must conform to stated page limitations, including minimum *1-inch margins and 12-point font of Calibri or equivalent*. Any proposals deviating from these formats will not be reviewed. Illustrations and tables must be of legible size and are *included* in the page limitation. References cited may be

included as a separate section *and are not included* in the stated page limits.

The completed Pre-proposal Submission Form (see end of this announcement) must be received via NYSG's eSea Grant submission website at http://www.nyseagrant.org/eseagrant (account registration required) as a single pdf by the closing **deadline of 5:00 p.m. EDT on March 19, 2026**. *Hard copy, email, and fax submissions will NOT be accepted*. Please note that, although the submissions are to NYSG, this is a jointly administered funding opportunity and all the submissions will be processed by both programs, CTSG and NYSG, as a single pool. *Preliminary proposals that are not received by this deadline will be discarded without review, as will preliminary proposals that fail to comply with content, format, budget, and other requirements. Note that submissions with sections that exceed specified page limitations will be rejected, not truncated.* We want all submissions to have a fair and equal opportunity, so please be sure to carefully follow the instructions. Unless required by your institution, it is not necessary for your university (or institution) sponsored programs office to formally approve your preliminary proposal before submission.

Each lead applicant will be notified by May 14, 2026**,** about whether a full proposal is encouraged. A summary of Panel results will be provided to pre-proposal PIs who were encouraged to submit a full proposal by May 29, 2026, and by June 15 to pre-proposal PIs who were not encouraged to submit a full proposal. Note that submission of full proposals will only be encouraged for those prospective principal investigators with the highest-ranked preliminary proposals following the Panel review and evaluation. For those investigators encouraged to submit full proposals, the deadline for these full proposals is July 17, 2026, at 5:00 p.m. EDT.

The total budget request for a project may not exceed $1,000,000 for the entire project, or $500,000 for each year, including all direct and indirect costs.

Please double-check your Pre-proposal Submission file before uploading it to eSea Grant at http://www.nyseagrant.org/eseagrant to make sure it is a PC-readable pdf and that it is your final version. You will need to register a user account at the eSea Grant website before you can upload your preproposal. It is recommended to register your eSea Grant account early before submitting your preproposal. *Warning!!* **Do not wait until just before the deadline** in case you encounter technical difficulties with your computer or unexpected network issues. Note that the deadline is based on the server clock and not your computer clock. For best results, it is recommended that you use your office computer at your institution to submit your pre-proposal. Allowing yourself plenty of time (at least several hours, if not days) to submit is highly recommended. Sending a test submission is allowable, if you identify it as such. You will receive an auto-receipt with a time and date stamp from the website confirming your submission, but this is not an indication that your file is readable. If the file contains a virus or is unreadable, your submission cannot be accepted. It is recommended to open the pdf file on another computer to confirm there are no issues with the file. If you find your file has an error or needs to be updated, you may submit an updated version if it is before the deadline. The most recent submitted version will be used for the review process.

7. Schedule

- January 15, 2026 – Sea Grant announces Call for Pre-proposals

- January 23, 1 pm – Informational webinar
  https://stonybrook.zoom.us/j/94394423396?pwd=ovQ5Gua34M92CdNoKbAXBU1c6by8I7.1

- January 29, 11 am – Informational webinar

  https://stonybrook.zoom.us/j/95100355006?pwd=2EaAB9A8lztIhbSqli66ftuhj6fnuX.1&jst=3

- March 19 – Pre-proposals are due by 5:00 p.m. EDT via
  http://www.nyseagrant.org/eseagrant

- May 14* – Sea Grant notifies lead investigators about whether a full
  proposal is encouraged

- May 29 & June 15* – Sea Grant distributes to all lead investigators a summary of
  Pre-proposal Review Panel results for their submission

- July 17 – Full proposals are due by 5:00 p.m. EDT via
  http://www.nyseagrant.org/eseagrant

- October 16* – Sea Grant notifies lead investigators about decisions

- November 2* – Provide peer reviews and a summary of Full Proposal Review
  Panel results

- January 1, 2027 – Year 1 funding starts**; the completion, submission and approval of
  a QAPP is required. No data collection can be conducted by PIs until a Quality
  Assurance Project Plan (QAPP) has been approved.

- January 1, 2028 – Year 2 funding starts** if a QAPP has been submitted and approved
  and Year 1 progress is satisfactory.

*Dates are approximate and may vary slightly.
**Contingent on availability of funding.

8. If you have questions, contact:

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University of Connecticut
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Mr. Lane Smith
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Tel. (630) 632-6905
Email: lane.smith@stonybrook.edu

PRE-PROPOSAL SUBMISSION
FORM – INSTRUCTIONS

Please be sure to use the format and provide the information as described below. Submissions that do not include the required sections and information will be rejected as incomplete. Likewise, submissions that do not follow the specified instructions below or as indicated elsewhere in the Call will also be rejected as not meeting the submission requirements.

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1. **LAST NAMES OF PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATORS:** (e.g., Smith / Doe / Jones)

2. **BRIEF PROJECT TITLE (not to exceed 275 characters):**

3. **INVESTIGATOR(S) and ELIGIBILITY:** List **all** principal, co-principal, and associate investigators, including name, address, telephone, and email for each. *Also* indicate eligibility category for each (see Section 3 and specify A, B, C, or D).

4. **BUDGET:** Total of direct plus indirect costs ($1,000,000 max over duration of the project; $500K/year limit).
   A. Estimated Funding Request $_____

   B. Anticipated Non-Federal Cost-Share Provided (50% required) $_

   C. Expected Source(s) of Cost-Share:

5. **BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT:** Starting on a *new* page, use up to two pages MAX of text with the following a-e headings to describe your proposed project. Use all-around margins of at least 1" and a font size no less than #12 Calibri or equivalent. If the project description exceeds the 2-page limit, it will be rejected (not truncated).

a) **OBJECTIVES, HYPOTHESIS(ES), and APPROACH:** List the overall objectives of your proposed study, with a statement of the hypothesis(es) to be tested and explicitly link these hypotheses to the data collection and analytical methods proposed so it is clear how they will be tested. **Proposals without a specifically stated hypothesis will not be considered.** Include brief information about the approach to be used and whether there are links to other past, current, or proposed efforts.

b) **CCMP GOAL -> OBJECTIVE -> ACTION(S) ALIGNMENT:** Applicants **must EXPLICITLY** specify which **CCMP Goal, Objective, Action**(s) the project will address. A vague listing of or references to those priorities without an effective explanation of how the proposed work will specifically address the **Goal -> Objective -> Action(s)** will not be deemed sufficient. Proposals that incorporate cross-cutting connections are encouraged.

c) **RATIONALE:** Explain the rationale for, and significance of, the proposed project to Long Island Sound in addressing the CCMP. Specify whether and how the research supports the cross-cutting connections.

d) **USEFULNESS OF THE ANTICIPATED RESULTS TO MANAGEMENT:** Explain how the research and anticipated results are actionable and can be used to inform and advance the management of Long Island Sound and its resources. Clearly identify the actionable information, tools, or outputs to be produced by the research. Submissions that merely state that the information generated has value to managers, without adequate elaboration, will not be competitive.

e) **ENGAGEMENT OF END USERS:** Clearly identify the individual(s) or organizational users/beneficiaries who will apply or utilize the research results, how these users will be engaged in the process, and the anticipated management outcomes. Applicants should consider involving the users/beneficiaries early in the process and supply letters of support with the full proposal if encouraged to submit.

f) **LITERATURE CITED:** Starting on a *new page*, present the full citations for any work referenced under #5. The space required to list the literature cited is not counted under the 2-page maximum for #5 (Brief Description of Project). There is no page limit for this section.

6. (OPTIONAL) REVIEWERS: On a separate page, you are invited to suggest up to three potential peer reviewers who would not have a conflict of interest with you, your team, or your institution, should you be encouraged to submit a full proposal. We may or may not select these peer reviewers, so there is no need for you to contact them. If there is anyone who you feel should *not* be asked to provide a review, you may list up to two people and we will do our best to accommodate this request. Omitting this section is acceptable.

Please note that the full proposal will require a **Data Management Plan. This requirement will be described in the full proposal instructions.

Please note that projects chosen for funding under this Call require approval of a **Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP) before initiation of data collection. This requirement will be described in the full proposal instructions.

USEFUL LINKS:
- Submission website: http://www.nyseagrant.org/eseagrant
- Long Island Sound Partnership: https://lispartnership.org/
- CCMP: https://lispartnership.org/2025/06/2025-comprehensive-conservation-and-management-plan-ccmp/
- NY Sea Grant: NYSeaGrant.org
- CT Sea Grant: https://seagrant.uconn.edu/