

LONG ISLAND SOUND STEWARDSHIP FUND 2026 REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP)

Proposal Due Date: Thursday, February 5, 2026, at 5:00 pm Eastern

OVERVIEW

The Long Island Sound Stewardship Fund (LISSF) is a competitive grant program seeking proposals to restore and protect the health and living resources of Long Island Sound. It is interested in empowering communities of all kinds (particularly communities typically underrepresented in environmental programs and projects) to access, improve and benefit from Long Island Sound, its waterways, and surrounding lands. Up to \$400,000 is expected to be available for grants in 2026. The most competitive proposals will incorporate multiple values including sustainability, resilience, and diversity, equity, and inclusion.

The LISSF aims to:

- support non-profit 501(c)(3) public charities working on issues and projects that address the strategies and [Implementation Actions](#) of the [Long Island Sound Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan](#) (CCMP).
- To meet these goals, the LISSF will use the evaluation criteria set forth below.

THE LONG ISLAND SOUND FUNDERS COLLABORATIVE

The Long Island Sound Funders Collaborative (the Collaborative) is a group of funders with missions that include clean waters, thriving habitats, and sustainable communities in the Long Island Sound region. While most of the funders are not solely focused on these goals, we aim to build our effectiveness through collaboration. Since its inception, the Collaborative has worked together to learn about the myriad issues facing the Sound and possible solutions. The Long Island Sound Stewardship Fund (LISSF) pools our investments to support projects that address pressing challenges and provide for a healthy, productive, and resilient Sound now and into the future. The LISSF is administered by The New York Community Trust. Additional foundations providing support for grants under this RFP are:

Lily Auchincloss Foundation, Community Foundation of Eastern Connecticut, Community Foundation of Middlesex County, Eder Family Foundation, Fred I. and Gilda Nobel Foundation, Jeniam Foundation, McCance Foundation, and National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, among others.

The LISSF awards grants in three priority areas:

- Capacity Building – helping to build stronger nonprofits working in the Long Island Sound watershed in Connecticut and New York.
- New Collaboration - fostering new collaborative efforts and innovative partnerships on projects.

- Piloting and Planning - starting or accelerating new tools, strategies, or efforts; or planning for the next stage in existing efforts.

PROGRAM PRIORITIES

Capacity Building to increase the effectiveness of organizations that focus on restoration and protection of the health and living resources of Long Island Sound. Capacity building can occur in every part of an organization, including programs, management, operations, technology, governance, fundraising, and communications. Some examples:

- Strategic plan development
- Communication plan development
- Fundraising plan development
- Board and leadership development
- Technology improvements (such as software, compatibility efforts, and training)
- Accounting and budgeting improvements
- Incorporating members of underserved communities into your organization and/or within direct project delivery
- Financial management or donor management, volunteer, or administrative software
- Website design, brochure materials, printing and postage, presentation materials
- External technical assistance to address organizational challenges
- Organization, program, and service assessment or evaluation.

New Collaboration to foster organizations working together for the first time, or in new ways to accomplish a common goal and to achieve greater impact focused on improving the health and living resources of Long Island Sound. More competitive proposals will focus on innovative ways of collaborating. Some examples:

- Project management, design, tools, support and/or services that bridge gaps in technical capacity of multiple partner organizations
- Multi-organizational agreements about roles and responsibilities in a coalition
- Conducting regional forums, meetings or events that provide a space for collaboration and information-sharing
- Developing new partnerships or integrating and/or merging existing organizations or programs
- Technical assistance, training, resources, and/or leadership to facilitate action among multiple partner organizations.

Piloting and Planning to increase environmental and natural resource impact, or to foster the “next best step” for applicability or scalability across the Sound. Activities may include scoping and design to set the stage for large, multi-year projects. Some examples:

- Advancing tools and strategies to improve water quality
- Advancing tools and strategies to restore coastal habitats or improve coastal resilience
- Advancing tools and strategies to increase the knowledge and engagement of the targeted constituencies or the public

- Planning activities necessary for applications to larger funding sources
- Field testing of new technologies and management approaches.

GEOGRAPHIC FOCUS

All projects must address issues within part of the Long Island Sound watershed in the states of Connecticut and New York as shown on the [LISS National Estuary Boundary Map](#).

SIZE OF GRANT AWARDS

Grants are expected to range from \$20,000 to \$200,000. Please note that few, if any, grants will be made at the maximum award level of \$200,000.

- Proposals requesting grants of more than \$55,000 should demonstrate regional value and scope, significant and robust partnerships, and dramatic impact on the Long Island Sound and the communities and constituencies served.
- Organizations that anticipate requesting a grant of \$100,000 or more must first contact info@lisfc.org by 5pm (ET) on Friday, January 16, 2026 to discuss the idea before submitting a proposal. Failure to do this will result in your proposal being rejected.

WHO MAY APPLY

The only eligible applicants are nonprofit 501(c)(3) public charities.

GRANT PERIOD

Projects under \$100,000 must start within three (3) months of award notification and be completed within fifteen (15) months after notification of grant award. Projects requesting \$100,000 or more must start within three (3) months of notification and be completed within twenty-four (24) months of award notification. Organizations will be notified by May 2026.

GRANT GUIDELINES

- Organizations may submit up to two proposals.
- Funds may not be used for:
 - Activities prohibited by 501(c)(3) organizations
 - Scientific research. (Those interested in funding for research should consider the [LISS Research Grant Program](#))
 - Marketing efforts that serve to generally promote solely the applicant organization and its initiatives.
 - Building or capital or acquisition campaigns, endowments, sponsorships, or to address budget deficits.
 - General operations grants.
 - Tuition reimbursement.
- Incomplete applications or applications requesting funds below the minimum or above the maximum allowable award amount will not be considered for funding.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

- Program Priorities – The proposal addresses one or more of the program priorities (Capacity Building, New Collaboration, Piloting & Planning) outlined in this Request for Proposals. The proposal has specific, measurable performance outcomes to evaluate success.
- Qualifications – The applicant organization has experience relevant to delivery of the proposed project and/or a proven track record of success in implementing projects with measurable results.
- Partnerships – The organization formally engages relevant technical and/or local partners to support development and delivery as needed. This criterion is particularly relevant for “New Collaboration” proposals and for proposals aiming for diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- Technical Merit – The proposal is technically sound and feasible, directly relates to the CCMP and its Implementation Actions, and the proposed project sets forth a clear, logical, and achievable work plan and timeline.
- Budget – Costs are allowable, reasonable, and clearly budgeted.

TIMELINE

Dates of activities are subject to change. Please check the Long Island Sound Stewardship Fund program page on The New York Community Trust’s website:

<https://thenytrust.org/collaborative-fund/long-island-sound-stewardship-fund/>

- Request for Proposals (RFP) opens: Thursday, December 11, 2025
- Applicant Webinar: Optional webinar on Wednesday, December 17, 2025, from 2:00pm – 3:30pm (ET). Register here: https://nyct-cfi-org.zoom.us/meeting/register/VLPhWrntSgK09FMsDpE_ug
- Proposal Due Date: Thursday, February 5, 2026, at 5:00 pm (ET)
- Review Period: February through March 2026
- Grant Notification & Contracting Commences: April 2026

HOW TO APPLY

Review and follow the Grant Application Instructions listed below. When you’re ready to submit your proposal, you’ll need to apply through our [Grantseeker Portal](#) (scroll down to Additional Requests for Proposals and you’ll see the request for the Long Island Sound Stewardship Fund 2026). You must submit a complete application electronically through the Grantseeker Portal. No mailed or emailed proposals will be accepted.

QUESTIONS

- Questions about this RFP? Please consult Frequently Asked Questions, and plan to participate in the webinar. Other questions: info@lisfc.org
- Questions about the Grant Application Instructions? Contact Jeannie DeMaio at The New York Community Trust – Long Island at jdemario@thenytrust.org.

LONG ISLAND SOUND STEWARDSHIP FUND (LISSF) 2025 GRANT APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

DUE DATE: Thursday, February 5, 2026 at 5:00 pm Eastern

SUBMISSION MATERIALS

All applications *must* be submitted electronically through the New York Community Trust's [Grantseeker Portal](#) (scroll down to the Additional Requests for Proposals and look for the Long Island Sound Stewardship Fund 2026.)

To apply, you will need to combine the following materials into a single PDF (**no scanned documents, no greater than 25 MB in size**):

1. LISSF Proposal Narrative (prepare based upon the proposal narrative outline below and upload as part of the application)
2. LISSF Expense and Income Budget Forms (forms provided below)
3. Current Year, Board-Approved Operating Budget (*note: if you are a university, submit operating budget for your specific department only*)
4. Current Board List
5. Letters of Support (maximum of 4) from partners that are directly involved in project delivery. *Recommended where relevant but not required.* **Do NOT mail letters to the New York Community Trust.** Address letters of support "To whom it may concern."
6. Financial documents:
 - IRS Tax Exempt letter
 - *Current (2024 or later) GAAP Audited Financial Statements or if a GAAP is not available, a current Balance Sheet/Income Statement*
 - IRS Form 990 (most recent, if not available in GuideStar) or electronic notice
 - Please secure a non-proprietary identifier provided by the System for Award Management (SAM). This is called the Unique Entity Identified (UEI). This number does not need to be secured in advance of proposal submission, however if funded you must have the UEI. The process for securing this number is found at SAM here: <https://www.sam.gov/entity-registration>

IF APPLYING WITH A FUNDS ADMINISTRATOR (FISCAL SPONSOR OR AGENT), provide the following documents for the sponsoring organization:

- Funds administrator's IRS Tax Exempt letter
- A letter signed by the funds administrator's executive director stating agreement to serve as an administrator for the applicant, explanation of the relationship to the applicant, and disclosure of any fees charged.
- *Current (2024 or later) GAAP Audited Financial Statements*
- Current board list of funds administrator's organization
- Funds administrator's IRS Form 990 (most recent, if not available on GuideStar)
- Funds administrator's UEI number. Please secure a non-proprietary identifier provided by the System for Award Management (SAM). This is called the Unique Entity Identified (UEI). This number does not need to be secured in advance of

proposal submission, however if funded you must have the UEI. The process for securing this number is found at SAM here: <https://www.sam.gov/entity-registration>

SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS

1. Combine the requested materials listed above (items 1-6) into a single PDF and save the file using the naming format “Organization Name.pdf.”
2. Complete a cover sheet for the [Long Island Sound Stewardship Fund 2026 RFP](#) and upload the single PDF.
3. Once the combined PDF is uploaded, click the certification box at the end of the cover sheet and click submit.

TIMELINE

- Proposal Due: **Thursday, February 5, 2026 by 5:00 pm (ET)**
- Review Period: February to April 2026
- Grant Notification and Contracting Commence: April 2026

QUESTIONS

- Contact Jeannie DeMaio at The New York Community Trust – Long Island at jdemario@thenytrust.org.

LONG ISLAND SOUND STEWARDSHIP FUND (LISSF) 2026 PROPOSAL NARRATIVE OUTLINE

Instructions: Please respond to all questions in the outline. Upload completed narrative into the application. Narrative *should not* exceed 5 pages. Prepare with 12-point font/Times New Roman on 8 ½ by 11” paper (or about 2,500 words).

Identify only 1 (one) application category from the LISSF Request for Proposals (RFP):

- 1) Capacity Building 2) New Collaboration 3) Piloting Tools & Planning

Short Description (50 words maximum)

Please provide a 2-sentence project description. The first sentence should BRIEFLY describe the primary project activities. The second sentence should BRIEFLY describe the primary deliverables or outcomes of the project. Example: *“Collect marine debris through pick-up canoe trips, on-shore trash collection, and a coastal cleanup event in Anytown, CT. The project will collect 4,500 pounds of trash involving 200 community volunteers.”*

Problem/Solution/Program Priorities (1,750 words maximum):

- Describe the specific problem(s) to be addressed by the project and its relevance to the restoration and protection of Long Island Sound
- Describe how the project will address the problem(s)
- Describe the desired results of the project
- **Include a bulleted list of specific outcomes (100 word maximum for this sub-section)**
- Explain why/how the problem(s), the project, and the results are relevant to the priorities of the LISSF RFP. For Capacity building grants, explain how the project will enrich your organization’s work as it relates to Long Island Sound.

Technical Merit (500 words maximum):

- Provide a work plan including:
 - a description of each major activity of the project and the method used to carry out that activity
 - a timetable indicating when major activities are to be conducted (show activity, responsible party or owner, and time period)

Major Project Activity	Owner	Time Period

Qualifications (125 words maximum):

- Describe organizational and staff qualifications and experience to deliver the proposed project.
- If relevant, describe partner organizations involved in the project and their specific formal role(s) in its delivery. We would expect to see such partnerships represented in the project budget. If partners are to be engaged in the project, please consider submitting Letters of Support confirming the nature of their participation.
- ***Do not*** provide *Curriculum Vitae* or resumes.

Community Profile (125 words maximum):

- Discuss who in the community will benefit from the project and how.
- If relevant, discuss how members of the community or other targeted constituencies were, or will be, directly engaged in project development and implementation.

Status of Previous Grants (if applicable, an additional 100 words per grant):

- If you received a grant(s) from LIS Stewardship Fund in the last two years (2024 and/or 2025 cycle), your reporting for those grants must be up to date. Additionally, if this project is related to prior grants, please provide a paragraph summary of progress associated with the prior grant(s) relative to the promised deliverables.

Long Island Sound Stewardship Fund
Expense Budget Form

Indicate how funds would be allocated. If you do not anticipate an expense for a particular budget category, skip that category. It is not necessary to enter a zero (0) value in the cost field.

ORGANIZATION: _____

Amount of Grant Request: \$ _____

ITEM	Total Program/ Project Budget (amount includes what you are requesting from the LISSF)	Specific Amount requested from the LISSF of that Total Program/ Project Budget
Personnel (List all staff & title assigned to program/project)		
	\$	\$
Benefits & Payroll Taxes		
Consultants		
Professional Fees (please specify)		
SUBTOTAL PERSONNEL:	\$	\$

Other Than Personnel Services (OTPS)		
Travel & Meetings	\$	\$
Marketing & Advertising		
Equipment		
Supplies & Materials		
Professional Development/Training		
Printing & Copying		
Telecommunications		
Postage & Delivery		
Occupancy/Utilities		
In-Kind		
Depreciation		
Contract Services (please specify)		
Other (please specify)		
SUBTOTAL OTPS:	\$	\$
TOTAL EXPENSES:	\$	\$

Long Island Sound Stewardship Fund
Income Budget Form

ORGANIZATION: _____

Amount of Grant Request: \$ _____ **Total Program/Project Cost:** \$ _____

List all sources of anticipated INCOME for the project/program for which LISSF funding is requested:

SOURCE	AMOUNT
CONTRIBUTIONS	
Business	\$
Individual	\$
EARNED INCOME	
Fees for Service	\$
Membership Income	\$
Special Events	\$
Product Sales	\$
Interest Income	\$
OTHER INCOME	
Balance Forward	\$
Operating Reserve	\$
In-Kind Support	\$
TOTAL:	\$

List all sources of anticipated GRANT INCOME for the project/program for which LISSF funding is requested. Indicate status of grants by noting either "Committed," "Pending," or "To Be Requested."

SOURCE	STATUS	AMOUNT
GOVERNMENT GRANTS		
		\$
		\$
		\$
		\$
CORPORATE GRANTS		
		\$
		\$
		\$
		\$
FOUNDATION GRANTS		
		\$
		\$
		\$
		\$
OTHER (please specify)		
		\$
		\$
		\$
		\$
TOTAL:	\$	
GRAND TOTAL:	\$	

LONG ISLAND SOUND STEWARDSHIP FUND (LISSF) 2026 FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Eligibility

What types of organizations are eligible to apply?

- Only nonprofit 501(c)(3) public charities are eligible to receive funding.

Are public schools eligible to apply?

- No. We only provide funding to 501(c)(3) public charities.

What if we have a fiscal sponsor?

- Your fiscal sponsor can be the applicant if it is a 501(c)(3) public charity.

Does an organization have to be incorporated in CT or NY to be eligible to apply?

- No. A tax-exempt 501(c)(3) public charity does not have to be incorporated in CT or NY to apply. It must be in good standing with the Internal Revenue Service per Publication 78 Data. The project must fall within our geographic boundaries.

What geographic area is eligible to receive funding through the LISSF?

- All projects must address issues within part of the Long Island Sound watershed in the states of Connecticut and New York as shown on the [LISS National Estuary Boundary Map](#).

Is an organization that currently has an active LISSF grant eligible to apply for additional funding?

- Yes, organizations with active grants are eligible to receive additional grants. However, you must be up to date on your reporting requirements for those grants. Your narrative should include a summary of progress associated with the active grant(s) relative to the promised deliverables.

Can an organization submit more than one application? Can an organization receive more than one grant award?

- Yes, an organization may submit a maximum of two proposals. It is possible for an organization to receive more than one award under a single funding cycle. However, it is more common for an organization to receive one award.

The RFP states that applicant organizations may submit up to two proposals per organization. Does that limit apply if we are listed as a “partner” in proposals submitted by another applicant organization?

- No. If you are a partner to another “applicant of record,” that does not count against your limit.

Can an eligible organization that receives a grant use LISSF funding to contract with a for-profit business to complete the project work?

- Yes, LISSF funding can support contracted labor. If possible, please list subcontractors or types of subcontractors you plan to engage in your application.

How closely related should our project be to the information in the Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan for Long Island Sound (CCMP)?

- Extremely, directly, intimately related. Your narrative should reference the strategies and specific themes and Implementation Actions of the CCMP. If you cannot do this, you will not be funded.

Grant Award Details

What amount of grant funding can be requested through the LISSF?

- Grant amounts will range from \$20,000 to \$200,000. However, few if any grants will be made at the maximum award level of \$200,000. Any proposal requesting \$55,000 or more should demonstrate regional value, robust partnerships, and measurable impact. Any organization requesting a grant of \$100,000 or more must contact info@lisfc.org by 5pm (ET) on Friday, January 16, 2026. Large grant awards are generally reserved for organizations working on regional projects in deep collaboration with at least two other partners.

Can a single project apply to multiple Program Priorities?

- No. While some projects will obviously fit more than one Program Priority, you must pick ONE priority. Pick the one with the best fit. We reserve the right to move your proposal into a different category if we think there is a better fit.

If our proposal is selected, when will we find out, and when will we receive funds?

- Notification of a successful proposal and contracting and payment (in most cases) are expected to commence in April 2026.

Program Priorities

What do you mean by “Capacity Building” and how does it differ from general operating support?

- Capacity Building proposals should focus on new investments made in an organization to change aspects of its operations. These grants are not designed to overcome an “incapacity to pay for” existing aspects of the organization. Thus, purchasing new software (and implementing it) is Capacity Building, while paying the subscription cost of previously implemented software is not.

We are a volunteer-based organization that wants to increase our capacity by requesting funds for a paid position to develop new and manage existing projects. Would this grant program consider funding this position?

- No.

We work with lots of folks. Does that mean we qualify for funding under the “New Collaboration” Program Priority?

- It depends. This Program Priority is designed to foster organizations working together for the first time, or in new ways. Your proposal should highlight what is new and different about your collaboration (the partners, the community served, the methods employed, etc.).

Is full fee or easement acquisition eligible to be funded?

- No.

For any other questions

- Register for the optional webinar on Wednesday, December 17, 2025 from 2:00 pm – 3:30 pm. To register for the webinar:
- A recording of the webinar will be available on the New York Community Trust webpage for the Long Island Sound Stewardship Fund: <https://thenytrust.org/collaborative-fund/long-island-sound-stewardship-fund/>.