



REQUEST FOR BIDS

Strategic Communications Plan for the Long Island Sound

Issued: April 8, 2021

Deadline: May 7, 2021

Project Description: NEIW PCC, in cooperation with The Nature Conservancy (TNC) in Connecticut, and support from the Long Island Sound Study (LISS) Communications Team, invites communications and marketing firms or other professionals to submit bids to develop a 5-year Strategic Communications Plan. The Strategic Communications Plan will provide guidance for LISS partners and staff to implement effective communications that inform, educate, and engage a diverse set of stakeholders and the nearly 9 million residents who live in the Long Island Sound watershed.

Background

The Long Island Sound Study is a federally authorized and funded partnership of the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the states of Connecticut and New York, and multiple federal, state and local agencies, academic institutions, environmental groups, and businesses. Established in 1985, the program is dedicated to restoring and protecting Long Island Sound, designated by Congress as an estuary of National Significance. It is guided by the mission, goals, and strategies of its Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan ([CCMP](#)) originally written in 1994, substantially revised in 2015, and updated in 2020. The CCMP's collaborative actions to restore and manage Long Island Sound are implemented through four focal themes: 1) Water and Watersheds; 2) Habitats and Wildlife; 3) Sustainable and Resilient Communities; and 4) Sound Science and Management.

A coordinated Communications Plan developed in the 1990s for LISS is currently conducted by a Communications Team of three LISS staff employed by partner organizations NEIW PCC and Connecticut and New York Sea Grant, respectively. The strategies and management actions adopted in the CCMP, combined with increased federal funding for the program, has significantly expanded the number and complexity of restoration initiatives conducted by LISS partners. Accomplishing an effort of this scale requires a new coordinated Sound-wide Strategic Communications Plan with measurable objectives that will maximize the impact of communications and outreach efforts, and ensure the effective use of resources. A new Strategic Communications Plan will provide guidance for LISS partners and staff to implement effective communications and outreach that inform, educate, and engage stakeholders and residents living in the Long Island Sound watershed.



Scope

With guidance from the Long Island Sound Communications Team and TNC, the consultant will conduct audience research which will provide direction on the strategies and activities that will be most effective at achieving the desired communication and outreach goals. The audience research will also inform a Long Island Sound Public Perception Study, which is a separate project, not included in the scope of this work. The work will take place in two phases:

1. **Research:** The contractor will assess the current status of LISS communications, challenges and opportunities for achieving the goals of the CCMP including the following duties:

- 1a. Review LISS guiding documents, CCMP, current and past communications products and initiatives of Communication Team

- 1b. Assess current perceptions and needs through a select group of individual and/or group interviews with Partners and Stakeholders, including but not limited to:

- o **Internal:**
 - LISS Management Committee
 - LISS staff, committees, and work groups
 - Citizens Advisory Committee
- o **External:**
 - state and local government officials (elected/appointed/staff) in the LISS watershed
 - key user groups or community leaders, including representatives of underserved communities and representatives of Long Island Sound recreational user groups
 - NGOs and municipalities who reside in the watershed, but outside the Long Island Sound coastal area, in the states of Rhode Island, Massachusetts, Vermont, and New Hampshire

The Communications Team will make available current and past communications products and discuss communications initiatives to the contractor prior to conducting stakeholder research. TNC, with support from the Communications Team members, will also provide assistance in arranging and organizing stakeholder interviews and meetings, and will be the primary point of contact with the contractor to guide the process.

2. Strategic Plan Development



2a. Plan Components

Using the information collected from the research, the contractor will work with the project team to build the strategic communications plan, which should include:

- a Vision Statement and measurable outcomes to achieve the communications objectives of the CCMP
- target audiences and prioritized communications tools to achieve the communications objectives of the CCMP
- suggested on-the-ground and outreach initiatives to achieve community engagement objectives of the CCMP
- key messages and prioritized communications and outreach channels
- estimated staff and financial resources for plan implementation and coordination, and a proposed timeline
- progress metrics to achieve the Vision over the five years of the Plan
- an executive summary highlighting the components of the Plan

2b. Sharing Progress in Developing the Plan

The contractor will work with the project team to conduct a remote presentation on the plan's methodology and objectives to the LISS Management Steering Committee. During the course of the project, the Steering Committee will provide guidance to ensure that the plan is aligned with LISS's mission and goals. The contractor, working with the project team, will then present the completed Strategic Communications Plan to the Citizens Advisory Committee and the Management Committee.

Project Outcome:

This project supports the priority Implementation Action of the CCMP to develop and implement a Communications Plan (SC-6), and the other actions that fall under Objective 3-1b of the [Sustainable and Resilient Communities Theme](#): to increase public knowledge and understanding of the ecological health of Long Island Sound. The plan will establish a framework for LISS staff, key partners and stakeholders to:

- expertly and strategically communicate with the public regarding LIS restoration efforts;
- enhance engagement from a wide variety of partners and stakeholders—such as elected and agency officials at all levels of government, business and civic society, as well as individual citizen stewards and recreationists—across a large geographic area; and
- identify, prioritize and advance communication strategies, messages and channels that measurably increase the willingness of key target audiences to take individual or collective actions that advance implementation of the Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan goals, change individual or community behaviors and/or take actions that support improved health and resilience of LIS.



Expected Deliverables & Outputs

1. **Quarterly Reports** delivered to the NEIWPCC project manager no later than the 10th day of January, April, July, and October during the duration of the project. A sample report and guidance are available [on NEIWPCC's website](#).
2. **Draft Strategic Communications Plan.**
3. **Final Strategic Communications Plan**, to include the components covered in part 2a of the Scope, and any additional sections that the contractor, with agreement from the Communications Team and TNC staff, believes should be included.
4. **1-2 presentations to the LISS Steering Committee, and a final presentation to the Management Committee and the Citizens Advisory Committee.**

Anticipated Project Schedule:

- Work is expected to begin July 1, 2021. The Strategic Plan should be completed by May 9, 2022 and a final presentation should be delivered by June 2022.

Funding

There is \$100,000 available for this project, and it is anticipated that one successful contractor will be chosen. All awards are subject to available funding.

Matching Funds

Although cost share or match is not required, projects providing non-federal cost share or match will receive favorable consideration over projects without cost share or match. For example, if the selected contractor is providing non-federal match for this project, these matching funds may be used to support the cost of designing and administering a survey without the development of an Information Collection Request (ICR). NEIWPCC funds may be used for analysis of the survey data and publication of the results regardless of whether or not an ICR is completed. See the **Surveys & Information Collection** section below.

Funding Partner Organizations and Key Groups

EPA

This project is funded by the US EPA to NEIWPCC, via Cooperative Agreement LI-00A00688.



NEIWPCC

NEIWPCC is a regional commission that helps the states of the Northeast preserve and advance water quality. NEIWPCC engages and convenes 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. For this project NEIWPCC will manage: 1) the RFB process and awarded contract with the selected consultant and 2) an agreement with The Nature Conservancy to identify, engage and solicit feedback from LISS partners and stakeholders at the local level to inform the communications plan.

The Nature Conservancy in CT

TNC is a global conservation organization dedicated to using collaborative, science-based approaches to solve pressing environmental challenges. Its mission is to conserve the lands and waters on which all life depends. TNC is an active member organization of the LISS Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC). In coordination with the selected contractor, TNC will identify key, representative LISS partners and stakeholders to inform consultant information gathering, including: recruit participants, conduct and/or assist with partner and stakeholder information gathering, interviews and message testing; participate in and provide input to stakeholder and partner interviews.

Bid Requirements

Bids must include a (1) cover letter, (2) title page, (3) project narrative, (4) itemized budget with budget justification, and (5) description of qualifications.

(1) 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 bid. The cover letter must state that:

- You are applying for funds under this RFB.
- You acknowledge that funding is provided on a reimbursement basis.

(2) Title Page

The title page should include all of the following information:

- **Project Title**
- **Primary Point of Contact:** Provide the name, title, and affiliation of the primary project leader, as well as mailing address, phone number, and email address.
- **Administrative Contact** (if any): Name, address, email address, and phone number
- **Authorized Representative:** Name and title of the person who is authorized to sign the contract.
- **Tracking Information:** Federal Tax Identification Number, DUNS Number, and Certified Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE)--Yes or No
- **Total Bid Amount:** Provide the total dollar amount for the project bid.



- **Abstract:** 75 words or less description of the project.

(3) Project Narrative & Timeline

Describe or explain the scope of work under this project. Provide an explanation of how you will carry out the project tasks in a detailed and concise way. Where possible, provide specific sub-tasks, methods, and/or processes to be implemented. Describe the specific outputs you will produce to meet the task requirements described above. Include the expected date of completion of major tasks. Note that if the project tasks include surveys, it could extend the timeline. (see **Survey and Information Collection** below).

(4) Budget

Include an itemized budget with cost breakdown by major budget categories (e.g., personnel, supplies, travel), linking costs to specific tasks/deliverables wherever possible, as seen in the example budget below. A brief justification or explanation of budget amounts should also be included.

EXAMPLE Budget Spreadsheet

Line Item	Task 1	Task 2	Task 3	TOTAL
Personnel	\$500	\$1,200	\$800	\$2,500
Fringe	\$150	\$360	\$240	\$750
Travel	\$0	\$100	\$300	\$400
Supplies	\$0	\$200	\$0	\$200
Other (specify)	\$250	\$300	\$50	\$600
Total Direct	\$900	\$2,160	\$1,390	\$4,450
Indirect	\$80	\$233	\$168	\$481
TOTAL BUDGET	\$980	\$2,393	\$1,558	\$4,931

(5) Description of Qualifications

NEIW PCC is seeking a consulting firm skilled and experienced in the development of non-profit strategic communication plans to develop the plan for this project. Please describe your professional expertise, experience in delivering projects of this nature, and include up to 5 samples of work pertinent to the



proposed project. Applicants should have experience and capacity to conduct and manage effective stakeholder meetings, either online or in-person.

Submission Process

To submit your bid, email to Robert Burg (rburg@longislandsoundstudy.net) with the subject line "Bid Submission" in the subject line.

Bids must be submitted by no later than **May 7, 2021, 12:00 PM Eastern (noon)**.

Questions: For questions regarding submission of bids, contact Robert Burg at rburg@longislandsoundstudy.net or call 203-977-1546

Learn more about the Long Island Sound Study at www.longislandsoundstudy.net.

Additional Requirements:

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 NEIW PCC shall be made available to NEIW PCC and the U.S. EPA in the formats in which it is stored or maintained. NEIW PCC 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 NEIW PCC and subject to any other approvals required by state or federal law. Reports and other deliverables will credit NEIW PCC and U.S. EPA for any work completed under the grant award.

Surveys & Information Collection

This project is funded through a U.S. EPA Assistance Agreement with NEIW PCC. NEIW PCC cannot use these funds to support a survey without completion of an Information Collection Request (ICR) describing the survey. The ICR must be submitted to the U.S. EPA Office of Management and Budget (OMB) for review and approval. This is an extensive process that can take several months to complete. A survey is defined as the collection of identical information from ten or more non-Federal respondents within a 12-month period. OMB approval must be received before any survey activities supported by NEIW PCC funds can begin. If the selected contractor is providing non-federal match for this project, these matching funds may be used to support the cost of designing and administering a survey without the development of an ICR. NEIW PCC funds may be used for analysis of the survey data and publication of the results regardless of whether or not an ICR is completed.



Insurance Requirements

NEIW PCC requires its contractors to maintain Workers Compensation and General Liability insurance. More details will be provided to applicants selected for funding. Note this applies for all contractors, including sole proprietors. If you cannot provide proof of insurance, please do not apply for this funding opportunity.

Funding Acknowledgement

The recipient agrees that any reports, documents, publications or other materials developed for public distribution supported by this assistance agreement shall contain the following statement:

"This project has been funded wholly or in part by the United States Environmental Protection Agency under assistance agreement LI00A00688 to NEIW PCC. The contents of this document do not necessarily reflect the views and policies of the Environmental Protection Agency, nor does the EPA endorse trade names or recommend the use of commercial products mentioned in this document."