In 2000, when LCHIP was first created, the concept of protecting and preserving the State’s most important natural resources was not new. Many of you will remember the LCIP program, which focused on land conservation only. What made LCHIP different is that the program not only conserves land, but also protects historical and cultural resources. Today I’ll only be talking about our Natural Resource grants. If you would like to learn about our Historical Resource grants program, you can speak with George Born or Dijit Taylor.

In 18 years LCHIP has completed 187 conservation projects and protected well over 214,000 acres of land. Unfortunately, there’ve been lots of solid conservation projects that we couldn’t fund. The single biggest reason LCHIP doesn’t fund a project is that we simply don’t have enough money.

When LCHIP was first created studies estimated that we would need over $12 million a year to accomplish the goals laid out by the legislature.
At 12 million a year, we would have given out $216 million in grants by now. In actuality, we’ve given out just over $50 million. Which is great, but means there are a lot more deserving projects out there than we can fund. So, the question is - how can you get a piece of the $3.5 – 4 million LCHIP gives out each year?

That is exactly what I am here to help you do. Part of my job is to help put your faces in this picture - to bring the strongest possible conservation projects to the LCHIP Board for funding.
Today–

✓ Eligibility
✓ Criteria
✓ Process
✓ INSIDER TIPS

So today I am going to cover three things:
• Eligibility Requirements
• Funding Criteria
• Grant Round Process
and then I’m going to give you a few “insider tips” if we have time
Let’s get started...

Applicants must be:
✓ 501 (C) or,
✓ Town, City, County

Eligibility – before you do anything, you need to make sure both the applicant organization, and the project you hope to fund, meet LCHIP’s requirements. Applicants must be either a 501 C - a publicly supported nonprofit organization exempt from paying taxes, OR a political subdivision of the State – a town, city, or county. Partnerships with State Agencies require specific approval of the LCHIP Board, so speak to me if you plan to partner with, or transfer conservation land to, a state agency.
Eligible Projects

Acquire Land (Fee)

Acquire a Conservation Easement (Easement)

Acquire Land and place under Easement (Fee w/ Easement or Both)

Is the project eligible? Projects eligible for LCHIP funding either

- Acquire land
- Acquire an easement
- Acquire land and then place it under a conservation easement

You can also use LCHIP funds to repay a loan used to complete an eligible project, or for conservation planning.

LCHIP Dollar

Matching Dollar

It is important to remember that LCHIP is a matching grants program, which means that the legislature intended that every LCHIP dollar spent would be matched by AT LEAST 1 dollar from other sources. We refer to this as leverage. But another way to think of it is, what percentage of the total project cost is LCHIP being asked to contribute?

There are 3 important financial requirements that each project must meet to be eligible.
The first requirement is that LCHIP not fund more than half of the total project cost. So what is included in the Total Project Cost?

While it may seem as though the Total Cost of your Project would equal the Total Project Cost, that isn’t the case. When we (at LCHIP) discuss your Total Project Cost, we mean the total of all LCHIP-eligible costs, meaning that some costs you incur won’t be included in your LCHIP budget. Your budget will include most expenses directly related to your real estate transaction, things like legal expenses, property value, survey, appraisals, stewardship, and closing costs.

So, what isn’t eligible under our statute and guidelines? Fundraising, printing, mileage, property improvements, and any amount you pay to acquire the land or easement over its appraised value are examples of expenses that are not eligible.
LCHIP cannot fund more than 50% of any Eligible Expense.

Once you confirm that your grant is no more than 50% of your Total Project Cost, you need to consider the second financial requirement. LCHIP cannot fund more than 50% of any eligible expense. You need to be sure that the LCHIP grant isn’t covering more than 50% of any individual expense, most importantly the Total Property Value. Most funders, like LCHIP, have certain expenses that they do not consider eligible. In the budget workbook we provide you will find an “Expense Allocation” worksheet. Using this tool can help you make sure you don’t end up with too much money for one expense, and not enough for another.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expense</th>
<th>Total Cost</th>
<th>LCHIP</th>
<th>Funder A</th>
<th>Funder B</th>
<th>Total Allocated</th>
<th>LCHIP %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Funding</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3,250.</td>
<td>3,000.</td>
<td>250.</td>
<td>6,500.</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TPV</td>
<td>6,000.</td>
<td>3,000.</td>
<td>3,000.</td>
<td></td>
<td>6,000.</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey</td>
<td>150.</td>
<td>75.</td>
<td></td>
<td>75.</td>
<td>150.</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal</td>
<td>100.</td>
<td>50.</td>
<td></td>
<td>50.</td>
<td>100.</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S’ship</td>
<td>250.</td>
<td>125.</td>
<td></td>
<td>125.</td>
<td>250.</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>6,500.</td>
<td>3,250.</td>
<td>3,000.</td>
<td>250.</td>
<td>6,500.</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Here is an example of the tool – showing a very streamlined budget. Each expense is listed on the left, and each funder across the top. Using the chart, you can allocate the funding from each funder to cover all or a portion of each expense, based on that funder’s requirements. The totals by funder and expense and the LCHIP % all calculate for you. If you are requesting a grant award that is greater than 50% of the Total Property Value, we will ask you to submit this worksheet at some point prior to the final funding decisions. We don’t require it with the application because you may not have identified all of your funding sources that early – but be prepared to submit the worksheet later in the grant round process.
The third financial requirement is about the type of funding you’ll be raising from sources other than LCHIP, called Match because these are the funds that will “MATCH” at least dollar for dollar, LCHIP’s grant. Match can come in the form of grants or private donations – these we refer to as Cash Match, or from donations of property value, volunteer time, or professional discounts, gifts in kind or donated services. These are considered non-cash match.

LCHIP requires that for every $1 in LCHIP funds you receive, you secure at least 50 cents in CASH match. In other words, you must raise cash match equal to or exceeding 50% of the LCHIP Award. If your project includes a significant donation of land or easement value, this could make completing your project budget very tricky. If this is the case, please call me to discuss.
Once you’ve me the eligibility criteria, the next thing to consider is whether or not your project is well matched with LCHIP’s funding criteria. LCHIP’s enabling statute lays out specific criteria which the Board **must** consider in evaluating proposals. LCHIP’s guidelines provide additional criteria which may also be considered, and a scoring system for evaluating projects. 50% of the points are assigned to resource-based criteria and 50% are assigned to applicant-based criteria.

When considering the resource,

- 35 points can be awarded based on the conservation attributes and significance of the resource - What natural features will your project protect and why is it important to protect those features
- 10 points can be awarded based on the degree and imminence of threat facing the resource
- 5 points can be awarded based on geography, historical or cultural resource values or a number of other factors
Of the Applicant-Based points
25 points can be awarded based on the capacity of the applicant and 25 points based on future strength of the project. We’ll dig deeper into all of these starting with the resource values.

Questions regarding the properties conservation attributes & significance are weighted the most heavily. So, what do we mean by attributes and significance? Specifically, we’ll consider:
How Unique the properties resource values are, what impact conserving, or not conserving, the property, might have and whether or not the project will connect to, expand or add value to nearby conservation land. We will also look at the degree to which the project addresses existing priorities in the state; for example - protecting active farmland or future drinking water supplies. In evaluating your project, we will be looking at the both specific natural resource attributes you will protect and the significance of those attributes. What’s the difference?
Attributes are Quantitative - they can be counted, measured.
What specific features will your project protect?
How many acres of prime farm soil? How much of the property is considered top-ranked wildlife habitat?

Significance is Qualitative.
Why is it important to protect those attributes?
Conservation Significance is Qualitative.
Discuss why those attributes, and therefore the property, are important to conserve.
Be sure you have a good understanding of what the most important qualities or characteristics of the property are, and be able to explain why they are significant for conservation. It is important that you know what you are proposing to protect, and why.
There are 10 points that can be awarded based on the degree and imminence of any threat to the property. And while there are many types of threats that LCHIP will consider – some are more imminent than others. Be sure to describe real, known threats to the conservation values you’ve described, and any meaningful indication that the property is at risk. While this is a good opportunity to provide some background, be sure to be factual – don’t catastrophize.

In addition, LCHIP’s enabling statute requires that land conservation projects in densely developed or rapidly developing areas of the state be more heavily ranked. How to evaluate this has sometimes been a challenge for applicants. On our website you will find links to data provided by the Office of Strategic Initiatives. This includes population density maps and population growth figures by town for the entire state. The LCHIP criteria give the question of threat considerable weight. I strongly suggest you consider the data that LCHIP has provided, and take some time to thoughtfully address these criteria.
The 5 points remaining points can be awarded based on a number of factors, these include:

- Whether or not the project also protects historical or cultural values
- The cost of the project relative to available funds and other projects in same round
- Geographic distribution of projects within grant round;
- And, of course, the “wow” factor – that thing that perhaps doesn’t fit in any of the other categories, but is meaningful nonetheless.

Moving on to the applicant-based criteria. It is important that LCHIP has confidence that the conservation project will be well-run, and that its long-term stewardship obligations will be met. We’ll start with the immediate – how the conservation project itself will be managed.
The 25 points in this category are further broken down into 4 subcategories:
5 points for the applicant’s capacity,
5 points for the degree planning that has gone into the project, and the community support enlisted,
5 points for the funding plan, and
10 points for the project budget.

LCHIP carefully considers the capacity of the applicant to successfully manage the project. What does this mean? We understand that not all applicants have done hundreds of conservation projects, but to be successful, the applicant must demonstrate that it is committed to the project, that it understands the work required, and that it is willing and able to comply with our program requirements. Does the applicant have the resources, knowledge and skills needed? If not, has the applicant pulled in those resources from other sources – hiring consultants for example, or partnering with another organization?
We also look at how much planning has gone into selecting the project, and the degree of community support it enjoys.

- Does the project have support from the local community?
- Has the town’s governing body formally endorsed the project?
- Is the project aligned with the community’s master plan?

We love to see projects that engage diverse community groups; that advance or are aligned with existing planning efforts and, we like to see towns providing meaningful support to local projects - to whatever extent is reasonable. For example - we can predict with good certainty that a town conservation commission will vote to support most land conservation projects in their town – but that isn’t always the case with the Board of Selectmen, who may be looking at things from a different perspective. This is why we ask if the Town’s governing body has formally endorsed the project – this endorsement carries weight that the endorsement of the conservation or open space committee doesn’t.

Up to 5 points can be awarded based on the strength of the funding plan, and another 10 for the project budget. In looking at the funding plan, leverage plays a big role. But there are other considerations as well. How much research and thought has gone into identifying a wide variety of funding sources. How solid is the funding plan? Do the identified sources make sense for that project – are they well-aligned and likely to commit the planned amounts? Is the project highly dependent on private donations? If so, does the applicant have a strong plan in place to secure those gifts? Finally - what happens if something goes wrong? What if the funding identified doesn’t come through?
The budget is, naturally - everyone’s favorite part. We ARE trying to make it a little easier. This year we’re rolling out a new Microsoft excel workbook. The workbook includes step by step instructions, a sample budget, and helpful tips, as well as guidance from the LCHIP requirements. The workbook was beta tested by four different organizations from big to small, and got great reviews.

The workbook includes step by step instructions, a sample budget, and helpful tips, as well as guidance from the LCHIP guidelines.
In the budget worksheet you’ll plug in all anticipated project expenses and funding sources and then, at the bottom, this nifty calculator will tell you whether or not you’ve hit each of the financial benchmarks we discussed earlier. If you see “Fail” or “Caution” be sure to check the instructions.

There are 25 points that can be awarded based on what will happen in the future. We consider both how the property will be stewarded and how it will be used.
Through its grant awards, LCHIP invests public funds to conserve and protect land. In doing so, we rely on the grant recipient, or a partner organization, to ensure the conservation restrictions placed on the property are upheld. For most projects the stewarding organization is the grant recipient, but not always. The application instructions will help you to properly identify the organization LCHIP considers the Steward. LCHIP will consider the steward’s ability to

• interpret the conservation restrictions conveyed in the deed
• carrying out annual monitoring activities,
• document those activities and any other actions taken, and of course the property’s conditions and uses, and
• take any steps necessary to enforce the restrictions and defend the conservation values, up to and including legal action.

Naturally, all of this has a cost – so we also look at how well the steward is positioned to meet that financial burden.

In addition to stewardship, we’ll consider how the property will be used. This is an important category that is often overlooked by applicants, but with 10 possible points, deserves some attention. How will the property be used and managed in the future? Things we consider include improved management of forest or farmland, special land management concerns or opportunities, potential future uses like for drinking water supply or educational programming, as well as public recreation, which brings us to ....
The public must be granted the right of access for hunting, fishing and transitory, passive recreational use on all land protected with LCHIP assistance.

The elephant in the room. Public Access

As a condition of each LCHIP natural resource grant, the public must be granted an affirmative right of access to, on, and across the property for hunting, fishing, and transitory passive recreational uses, subject to certain limitations as described in the LCHIP Guidelines. This is nonnegotiable. Be sure to talk with all parties regarding this requirement BEFORE you submit your application.

1. Intent to Apply Form
   • 1-Page
   • No later than May 17
   • Required!
2. Invitation to Apply
3. Proposals - by June 28 12pm

The first step in the application process is to submit an intent to apply form. Some programs call this a pre-application, or an eligibility review, but regardless, each serves the same purpose. I’ll review the project and applicant to be sure both are eligible for funding, and watch for red flags – aspects of your project that might need special attention. After reviewing the form I’ll either send you an invitation to apply, or get in touch to discuss any concerns so that you have time to address them BEFORE you submit the application. The next step will be submitting the proposal. Proposal packages are due in the LCHIP offices in Concord no later than 12 noon on Friday, June 28, 2019. There are NO exceptions to this deadline!
THE PROJECT PROPOSAL PACKAGE

• 10-page Application (fillable PDF)
• Project Budget (Excel)
• Budget back up
• Photographs
• Maps
• Shape Files
• Other Documents

Fair warning, pulling together the application and proposal package requires a LOT of work. Start early, and delegate! The proposal package consists of a 10-page application, which is a fillable pdf, and several other attachments and documents. You’ll need to submit 2 full paper copies of the proposal package, 6 abbreviated copies, a USB drive with electronic versions of each component and you’ll have 3-5 pages of documents that require original signatures - But don’t worry. We’ve provided you with a handy checklist to help keep track—use it and if, as I said, you start early and delegate, you should be fine. If, after reading the instructions provided, you need help with our fillable pdf forms, please contact Barb Beers (officemgr@lchip.org) or 224-4113.

1. Intent to Apply Form - by May 17
2. Proposals - by June 28 12pm
3. Site Visits – Summer/Fall
4. Decision – Mid-November
5. Funds available – March, 2020
6. Complete Projects by June 30, 2021

After you’ve submitted the proposal, I’ll contact you to schedule a site visit sometime in the late summer or early fall. The Board will make its funding decisions in mid-November, and generally speaking funds are available by March. You’ll be expected to complete your project by June 30, 2021
Insider Tips!
Tip #1 First and foremost – I strongly suggest that, if you haven’t already, you take time to familiarize yourself with our website – LCHIP.org.

All application materials are available online. Once at the home page, click on “For Applicants/Recipients” and then “For Natural Resource Applicants”
The process is laid out, step by step and takes you from determining if your project or organization are eligible, through applying, managing your grant award, and on to stewarding your property. Each of the numbered bars is a drop down containing more information, explanation and reference materials.

Tip # 2 - The biggest mistake applicants make in preparing their proposals is not reading the instructions. Read them. The instructions provide important background, helping applicants better understand the type of information LCHIP is looking for in each section.
INSIDER TIP #3
Remember your audience!

#3 Remember your audience!
Reviewers will be reading as many as 40 or more project proposals, and are experts in certain areas, but not necessarily all areas
• Avoid using highly technical terms, or explain them if unavoidable
• If you refer to a conservation plan or other document be sure to provide a link – where can we read more?
• Don’t catastrophize, or glorify. Be factual.
• Answer the question asked.

A note about text boxes
Some questions provide very large text boxes – lots of space for you to fill up. Think before you do that! Consider what the reviewer will see when they look at the page. Use bullets or white space where you can. Don’t repeat yourself. And if the question reads “If yes, explain” but you answered no, don’t explain!

INSIDER TIP #4
The Project Narrative
Focus on what really counts

#4. Focus on what really counts. On the first page of the application you are given space to describe the project. This may be the most important question of the entire proposal. This is your case statement, your executive summary, your elevator speech, your first impression. Use this space wisely! Your narrative should be clear, easy to read, and informative. You’ll expand on your ideas deeper into the application but tell us the basics here, and be ready to build on them throughout the application.
Do your homework

Question 1 is an Attributes Table that includes a pretty good list of common attributes. It may seem like it would be better to describe these in the narrative rather than fill out a table, or it may seem as though the information isn’t important. The Board and review panelists refer to this table often. Be sure the information you include here is complete and ties in with the rest of the application. NH GRANIT is an easy-to-use resource for collecting this information.

2. b. – Indicate the primary conservation values this project seeks to protect

- Agricultural
- Ecological
- Water / Aquatic
- Working Forests
- Recreation / Education
- Scenic / Aesthetic
- Cultural / Historic

Question 2 b requires you to identify the types of conservation values you are prioritizing for protection. Be thoughtful!
- Do the conservation attributes of the property support the values you’ve indicated here?
- Are you intending to include conservation restrictions that will ensure those values are protected?

Only rarely would you properly identify each of the 7 categories as a primary conservation value to be protected— and if you did, you might find it very tricky to write conservation restrictions that would support such wide goals. A clear understanding of the conservation purposes of a project from the outset is important for LCHIP and many other grant funders.

Ex: Do not indicate that conservation of agricultural resources is a priority, and then preclude agricultural use in your easement.