



CBEP Resilience and Monitoring Grants (Pilot)

Request for Proposals – Issued Spring 2024

[Casco Bay Estuary Partnership](#) (CBEP) requests proposals for projects that implement specific Strategies and Actions in the [Casco Bay Plan 2024](#). These are pilot grant programs that will be evaluated during the initial round for effectiveness. CBEP may adjust funding criteria or availability in future rounds.

Proposals are due by 5 PM on May 10, 2024.

In an effort to reduce barriers to applying, CBEP staff will discuss a project idea, walk through the application process, and provide guidance with preparing applications to those interested in receiving support. Consultation is not required but assistance is available for organizations that request it. For Resilient Habitats Grants applications, CBEP can assist with map development and preparation.

OVERVIEW

This RFP invites project proposals to three interrelated CBEP grant programs funded through the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL).

1. **Casco Bay Resilient Communities Grants:** Projects that *advance planning or strengthen networks* to increase community resilience (see related Strategy 3.2 of the *Casco Bay Plan*).
2. **Casco Bay Resilient Habitats Grants:** Projects that take tangible steps toward the restoration or enhancement of priority aquatic habitats with the intent of building ecosystem resilience (see Strategy 1.3 and Actions 1.3.A, 1.3.B, and 1.3.C of the *Casco Bay Plan*).
3. **Casco Bay Monitoring Infrastructure Grants:** Increase monitoring infrastructure and capacity to support collection of environmental data throughout the Casco Bay watershed (see Action 2.3.A and Strategy 4.3 of the *Casco Bay Plan* and the priority topics in the [Casco Bay Monitoring Plan](#)).

BACKGROUND

CBEP is one of 28 National Estuary Programs, a joint local/state/federal program established under the Clean Water Act with the goal of protecting and enhancing nationally significant estuarine resources, including Casco Bay and its watershed. CBEP's grant-making programs are shaped by four core goals from our five-year strategic plan, the [Casco Bay Plan 2024](#)¹. Funding and program timelines assume no disruption to availability of federal funds.

FUNDING AND AWARDS

- Funding requests up to \$25,000 per application will be considered.
- In this pilot round of the RFP, we anticipate awarding a total of \$150,000.
- Applicants may submit only a single proposal in response to this RFP; **if you are unsure which of the three grant programs your proposal best fits, please contact CBEP staff.**
- We expect to announce the next RFP for these grant programs in Fall 2024.
- Projects may require a subcontract agreement between CBEP's fiscal host, the University of Southern Maine, and grant recipients and will have a start date of June 1, 2024, at the earliest.

¹ The current 3/4/2024 draft has been approved by CBEP's Management Committee and awaits EPA approval.



Projects will end by December 31, 2025; slightly different timeframes will be considered if applicants demonstrate the need.

ELIGIBILITY

Eligible applicants include tax-exempt 501(c)(3) organizations, academic institutions, municipalities, state agencies, districts, counties, and other units of government. Partnerships that involve private individuals, informal associations, for-profit entities, and other entities that do not meet eligibility requirements are welcome but must partner with an eligible lead applicant. Road or lake associations that are not formally chartered should partner with an eligible entity. Contact CBEP for clarification.

Projects must occur within Casco Bay or the Casco Bay watershed (See [Casco Bay watershed map](#)). Town-wide projects that occur partly in the Casco Bay watershed and partly in an adjacent watershed (e.g., partly in Saco River/Saco Bay, Kennebec River, Androscoggin River) will be considered, as well as proposals that are statewide or regional in nature, provided that projects will directly benefit the Casco Bay watershed and its communities. In these situations, CBEP funds must be proportional to the benefits provided to the Casco Bay watershed and leveraged funding.

Our funding programs generally do not support:

- Proposals seeking funds for ongoing administrative support of established programs
- Proposals submitted by for-profit entities
- Political action or legislative advocacy

SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

Proposals are due by 5 PM on May 10, and should be submitted using the online [Application Form](#). **A Google account will be required to access and complete the application. If this is a barrier to applying, please reach out to the appropriate program contact (see below) and alternative application formats can be provided upon request.** Proposal submission must include a budget, preferably in a pre-formatted [Excel spreadsheet](#), although other formats may be used. An example budget is available on the [CBEP grant opportunities webpage](#) for reference.

Letters of commitment from partner organizations identified in the application as receiving grant funds must be attached to the application. No letter of commitment is required from the lead applicant organization. Optional letters of support from people or groups who will engage with or benefit from the project may also be attached to showcase the need for or importance of the project.

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL TIMELINE

- RFP Release: April 12, 2024
- Application Deadline: May 10, 2024
- Award Notifications: May 15, 2024
- Work Start Date (earliest): June 1, 2024
- Work End Date (latest): December 31, 2025



PROPOSAL EVALUATION

Separate review committees for each program, made up of CBEP staff, organizational partners, and affiliates, will evaluate proposals and make funding recommendations to CBEP staff for approval. The Committees reserve the right to request additional information from any applicant. The Committees will consider the following factors in their evaluation of proposals:

- **Project goal** is clear and well-aligned with targeted Strategies and Actions in the [Casco Bay Plan 2024](#) or the [Casco Bay Monitoring Plan](#) (Monitoring Infrastructure Grants only)
- **Project plan** clearly describes the activities to be undertaken, how activities will support the stated goals, and how tasks will be completed over a realistic timeframe.
- **Project outcomes** clearly describe deliverables and metrics for evaluating project success. Long-term benefits of the work and potential transferability to other projects should be identified. A final project report to CBEP will be required for some funded projects.
- **Project costs** are reasonable. Note – **matching funds are not required** for this grant funding. **However, budgets should include all funds required** for the project including in-kind support, and projects that include additional funding sources will be viewed favorably.
 - Grants will support reasonable staff time directly related to project implementation. For most awards, staff time is expected to represent a small portion of total costs, but exceptions may exist and should be justified in the proposal.
 - Proposals are welcome to include community engagement activities as up to 15% of the total project budget. Projects with more extensive community engagement components should consider applying to CBEP [Community Grants Program](#).

Projects that involve collaboration between multiple organizations and projects that directly engage and serve vulnerable and/or underserved groups (in alignment with CBEP's [Equity Strategy](#)) will be reviewed favorably. Applications submitted by or on behalf of communities that rank MEDIUM or HIGH on [Maine's Social Vulnerability Index](#) and communities with populations less than 4,000 are strongly encouraged.

PROGRAM CONTACTS

- A. Resilient Communities Grants: Victoria Boundy, Victoria.boundy@maine.edu
- B. Resilient Habitats Grants: Matt Craig, matthew.craig@maine.edu
- C. Monitoring Infrastructure Grants: Janelle Goeke, Janelle.goeke@maine.edu

RESOURCES

- [Application Form](#)
- [Application Budget Format](#)
- [Casco Bay Plan 2024](#)
- [Casco Bay Monitoring Plan](#)
- [Casco Bay Watershed Map](#)
- [Casco Bay Estuary Partnership Equity Strategy](#)



FUNDING PROGRAM 1: CASCO BAY RESILIENT COMMUNITIES GRANTS

Supporting Community-Driven Planning and Network-Building Projects for Community Resilience

Program Description

Casco Bay Estuary Partnership invites proposals from municipalities, watershed groups, and partnering organizations within the Casco Bay watershed for projects that either **a. advance climate resilience and conservation planning** or **b. build or strengthen community networks**, to increase community climate resilience in one or more Casco Bay watershed communities.

In alignment with CBEP's [Equity Strategy](#), the Project Team is encouraged to make every effort to reach, build trusting relationships with, and center priorities of groups that have been historically excluded from municipal government and other decision-making spaces. Groups include, but are not limited to, low-income communities, rural communities, small towns with limited staff capacity, disadvantaged communities, climate-frontline communities, and/or Tribal and Indigenous communities. Best practices for inclusive engagement are also encouraged, including but not limited to providing transportation services and providing stipends to enable full participation.

Project proposals must align at least one of these two project categories:

A. Planning

Planning Projects seek to develop assessments, plans, ordinances, designs, or other information that will guide community and/or habitat resilience. *Planning Project* examples include, but are not limited to:

- Conducting a climate vulnerability assessment, [Maine Flood Resilience Checklist](#) program, or other assessments
- Integrating conservation data and knowledge into local or regional plans such as comprehensive plans, capital improvement plans, open space plans, etc.
- Creating new community-driven plans such as local hazard mitigation plans, natural resource inventories, or open space plans that will help build community resilience
- Creating climate resilience stand-alone chapters for comprehensive plans
- Updating community ordinances that advance climate resilience, such as local shoreland zoning, floodplain management, and other local ordinances
- Collaboratively developed design projects that can be considered for funding opportunities that support final design, permitting, and construction
- Convening a design charrette for a vulnerable neighborhood

B. Strengthening Community Networks

Network-building projects seek to build the capacity of applicants and their partners to increase climate resilience by building or strengthening networks, increasing knowledge, and/or improving access to



resources such as funding. *Strengthening Community Networks* project examples include, but are not limited to:

- Supporting community-based and neighborhood organizations in their efforts to prepare for storm events and bolster social resilience, including creation of peer-to-peer learning opportunities and cross-sector collaborations
- Improving the intersection of groups working on community issues related to community resilience (such as public health, affordable housing, public transportation, etc.)
- Supporting or creating a cross-sector municipal or regional committee, grassroots community group or advisory working group focused on community resilience
- Organizing leadership training, support for community engagement or facilitation, or convening non-traditional or historically excluded partners, toward climate resilience

Program Criteria

The Resilient Communities pilot program will fund local or regional planning and capacity-building adaptation projects that help communities become more resilient to climate impacts and that support [Maine Won't Wait: A Four-Year Plan for Climate Action](#).

Note that all general program criteria and eligibility requirements listed in the general information above still apply. Criteria listed below are specific to the Resilient Communities Grant Program:

- Projects are in alignment with *Casco Bay Plan 2024*, specifically:
 - Action 2.2.A: Strengthen planning policies, site design requirements, and land use practices that protect and restore natural hydrology and reduce pollution from stormwater.
 - Action 2.3.B: Improve water quality in impaired and urban streams; and,
 - Action 3.2.A: Provide training, planning assistance and small grants to Casco Bay communities to protect aquatic ecosystems and support local resilience.
- Funding will support planning, design, and capacity-building projects within the Casco Bay watershed that are in general alignment with Maine Won't Wait's [Strategies E through H](#).
- Applicants should include robust community engagement in their proposals. Projects that engage with and serve underserved communities (language above) will be viewed favorably.
- Applicants should consider and describe how their project will benefit and involve those communities most impacted by climate change.

Application Process

Applicants are encouraged to set up a meeting time with Victoria Boundy, CBEP Community Engagement Coordinator, to discuss a project concept, request assistance with proposal preparation, or request CBEP support to determine project suitability for this fund.



FUNDING PROGRAM 2: CASCO BAY RESILIENT HABITATS GRANTS

Program Description

CBEP invites proposals to the Resilient Habitats Grants program for projects that contribute to the restoration, enhancement, and resilience of Casco Bay's coastal habitats and aquatic habitat continuity in the Casco Bay watershed. Priority areas include: 1) river and stream restoration through *StreamSmart* culvert installation, removal of dams on main stem rivers and streams, in-stream habitat enhancements (placement of woody debris), or other actions that enhance fish passage and expand habitat access and habitat quality for native species and anadromous fish; 2) resilience-building of tidal marshes and tidal flats through emerging and novel methods; 3) application of *CoastWise* best practices for addressing tidal restrictions, replacing tidal culverts, and accommodating tidal marsh migration in response to sea level rise; and, 4) restoration and resilience of sub-tidal shellfish reefs and eelgrass beds.

This grant program aims to be strategic in advancing projects through key stages. Strategic uses of this Fund vary by project; examples include topographic surveys, geotechnical analyses, hydrological monitoring & modeling, and other forms of site assessment; engineering and design, including conceptual alternatives, preliminary designs, and final design; and, regulatory 'pre-app' meetings, permitting or bid oversight. Requests for general project management funding will be considered and capped at 20% of the grant award. If a subcontractor will conduct a portion of the work, please describe the selection process. Other activities may be considered if a strategic need can be demonstrated. Proposals that integrate community resilience with ecological resilience outcomes are encouraged.

Program Criteria

The following additional criteria will be used to select projects for funding:

- Fit with *Casco Bay Plan 2024*, specifically:
 - Strategy 1.3: Enhance habitat resilience and restore connectivity of coastal wetlands, aquatic habitats, and shorelines.
 - Action 1.3.A: Lead efforts to restore and manage coastal habitats to enhance resilience
 - Action 1.3.B: Lead efforts to restore aquatic connectivity through culvert replacement, dam removal, and other methods.
 - Action 1.3.C: Accelerate recovery of Casco Bay eelgrass to 2018 levels by reducing key stressors and conducting restoration.
- Fit with priority aquatic habitats described above.
- Expected benefits for ecosystem resilience and/or for diadromous and native fish, wildlife, and/or plant communities; area or distance to be restored.
- Location and size of the project, including fit with a larger plan.
- Habitat values for aquatic [Species of Greatest Conservation Need](#).
- Strategic use of funding, project timeliness, cost effectiveness, and need.
- Likelihood of successful implementation and qualifications for the proposed work.



Minimum Requirements for all Projects

1. Projects must lead to clear benefits to aquatic ecosystems.
2. Applicants must provide documentation of landowner permission for the proposed project.

Application Process

Applicants are encouraged to set up a meeting time with Matt Craig, CBEP Habitat Program Manager, to discuss a project concept, request assistance with proposal preparation, or request CBEP support for development of maps and other background information and determine project suitability for this fund.



FUNDING PROGRAM 3: CASCO BAY MONITORING INFRASTRUCTURE GRANTS

Expanding monitoring capacity in the Casco Bay Watershed

Program Description

The Casco Bay Estuary Partnership invites proposals to enhance monitoring of water resources and associated habitats and to address the monitoring needs identified in the *Casco Bay Plan* and *Casco Bay Monitoring Plan*. The goal of this grant program is to increase monitoring infrastructure and capacity to support long-term collection of environmental data in Casco Bay and its watershed. Eligibility includes, but is not limited to, municipalities, coalitions of municipalities, land trusts, community organizations, non-profit organizations, and school groups. The program is not intended to fund legally required monitoring efforts, but funds may be used to expand upon required efforts to build more extensive long-term monitoring programs. In addition to Monitoring Infrastructure Grants (due **May 10th**), proposals for Rapid Response Monitoring Grants **will be accepted throughout the 2024 calendar year**.

Monitoring Infrastructure Grants

These grants seek to expand the monitoring capacity in the region by 1) supporting the establishment of new monitoring programs or collaborations, 2) increasing the capabilities of existing monitoring programs by enabling collection of more frequent data, data from additional sites, or additional types of data, or 3) supporting monitoring program updates such as replacing outdated equipment or funding development of practices and protocol documents to meet certification requirements.

Allowable costs might include:

- Purchase of automated field monitoring equipment such as buoys, data sondes, or data loggers
- Purchase of laboratory equipment to process field-collected samples
- Costs to add telemetry to existing data collection platforms to provide real-time or near real-time access to data
- Establishment of new monitoring collaborations
- Building long-term “sentinel” monitoring programs to track impacts of climate change
- Developing and documenting data quality assurance practices (including writing “SOPs” and “QAPPs” or upgrading laboratory practices to meet certification requirements)

Rapid Response Monitoring Grants

Casco Bay Estuary Partnership recognizes that monitoring needs are not always predictable and that extreme events can occur that require unanticipated but urgently needed monitoring. To address this need, we are pleased to offer **Rapid Response Monitoring Grants, for which proposals will be accepted at any point in the 2024 calendar year. Applications up to \$15,000 will be considered.**

These grants will support increased monitoring in response to documented extreme events that are within or have the potential to affect the Casco Bay watershed, such as a major storm, large algal bloom, widespread and abrupt shift in water conditions (e.g., spike in water temperature or nutrient levels), or pollution event (e.g., oil or chemical spill). Proposals should be led by organizations with existing monitoring programs that have infrastructure to respond quickly to extreme events. If a new



organization without monitoring capacity aims to undertake monitoring in response to an extreme event, they should apply in partnership with an organization with pre-existing monitoring capacity.

Potential applicants must contact Janelle Goeke (janelle.goeke@maine.edu) prior to submitting a proposal to confirm the extreme event to which they seek to respond qualifies for a Rapid Response Monitoring Grant. Upon confirmation of the event, they will be invited to submit a proposal and provided with a streamlined application form. Proposals will follow the same review and selection process as Monitoring Infrastructure Grants, but on an accelerated timeline. The review committee will aim to review and respond to all proposals within two weeks of submission.

Program Criteria

All general program criteria and eligibility requirements listed in the general information above still apply. Criteria listed below are specific to the Monitoring Infrastructure Grants Program.

- Funding requests up to \$25,000 per application will be considered.
- Funding should be used to increase monitoring capabilities and infrastructure in the Casco Bay watershed
- Funding should NOT be used to cover regular costs of already ongoing monitoring efforts
- Applicants should demonstrate the potential for long-term data collection that stretches beyond the funding period (this may not be applicable for Rapid Response Monitoring Grants)
- Any data collection supported by program funding must occur under appropriate data quality assurance practices. This may require development and EPA approval of a Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP), which may take several weeks. CBEP staff can offer assistance with QAPP development, contact Janelle Goeke with questions.

Current funding priorities include

- Supporting regional data synthesis
- Increasing monitoring of freshwater tributaries to Casco Bay
- Providing materials or capabilities that will benefit multiple monitoring partners (encouraging collaboration and shared resources)
- Increasing regional capacity to monitor Casco Bay and the watershed

Programs that fall within the priority areas identified above will be viewed favorably, but proposals outside these priority areas will also be considered.

Application Process

Applicants are encouraged to set up a meeting time with Janelle Goeke, CBEP Staff Scientist, to discuss a project concept, request assistance with proposal preparation, or request CBEP support for development of documents and project plans and determine project suitability for this fund.