



CHESAPEAKE BAY
FUNDERS NETWORK



Chesapeake
Bay Trust

Request for Proposals

Contractual Outreach Services

Capacity Building Initiative Organizational Grant Program

Proposal Deadline: 6/26/2025

Section I: Introduction

1.1 Background:

The Capacity Building Grant Program is an annual program of the Chesapeake Bay Funders Network (CBFN). It seeks to support the capacity of organizations working on both community and environmental health issues. “Organizational capacity” is defined as activities that strengthen an organization to help it better fulfill its mission. Organizations that are strong and healthy are more effective in carrying out their missions and are more consistent and sustainable partners. The grant program makes awards to eligible nonprofit organizations or local governments to strengthen their internal capacity or strengthen the capacity of similar organizations. Eligible organizations include those that provide services within the Chesapeake Bay Watershed, and that have a water and/or natural resource focus within their work aligned with the [Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement goals](#).

Funding for the Capacity Building Initiative is provided by members of the Chesapeake Bay Funders Network (CBFN), specifically the Agua Fund, Chesapeake Bay Trust, Prince Charitable Trust, and Keith Campbell Foundation. Additional support is also provided by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Chesapeake Bay Program and the Philip Merrill Foundation.

1.2 Purpose:

The purpose of this Request for Proposals (“RFP”) is to select a contractor to serve as a “Connector Group” for the Capacity Building Initiative grant program. The Connector Group will perform outreach activities and support services to increase the number of successful applicants to the Capacity Building Initiative Grant Program. The contractor should be able to identify nonprofits who are currently under-engaged or low-capacity, and who could benefit from an investment in their organizational capacity and assist them in preparing a grant application.

Section II: Services/Scope of work and Offeror's minimum qualifications

2.1 Timeline and Amount Available:

The applicant may request a maximum of \$50,000 for the scope of work outlined in this Request for Proposal (RFP). Work must be completed by December 31, 2026. Contingent upon funding availability and contractual performance, the timeline may be extended through a contract amendment to support additional years of work. The Trust will notify the contractor by the end of the period of performance if additional services in subsequent years will be requested as part of this contract. The anticipated timeline is outlined below:

- a. **Program Orientation and Outreach Planning: August 2025 – February 2026**
The Connector Group will work with the Trust to understand the Capacity Building Initiative, including the application and review process, evaluation criteria, common challenges applicants face, and common feedback. This phase will also include the development of an outreach plan and workshop materials.
- b. **Outreach Activities: February 2026 – July 2026**
Conduct outreach to increase awareness of the Capacity Building Initiative and to identify potential applicants.
- c. **Training and capacity building activities: March 2026 – July 2026**
Concurrently with outreach activities, the Connector will work with the Trust to develop and deliver workshops to expand understanding of organizational capacity building.
- d. **Grant Application Period: April 2026 – July 2026**
During this period, Connectors will assist organizations in crafting their narrative responses, budgets, and other application materials.
- e. **Continuation of Support Services: August 2026 – December 2026**
Following the grant application period, support services outlined in the contract will persist until December 2026. This encompasses any ongoing assistance with kick-off meetings, document submission, and/or decline calls and suggested proposal revisions as needed to ensure the success and sustainability of the project beyond the initial outreach and funding phases.

2.2 Scope of Work and Deliverables:

The contractor will provide outreach activities and advertisement in the Chesapeake Bay watershed regarding the capacity building funding opportunity to local governments and nonprofits. The contractor should translate the funding program's goals into language best received by these audiences.

The scope of work will include the following deliverables:

- a. **Completion of outreach activities to community-based organizations** who need funding to build their organizational capacity through a minimum of three outreach methods. The methods to be used by successful Offerors can include a variety of practices, and the methodologies chosen should be matched to the audience and justified in the proposal. The Offeror should be as specific as possible when describing methods to be used. Generally, a scope of work that involves a combination of strategies above will be more effective than using one strategy. Example methods may include, but are not limited to:

- a. Virtual convening/meeting platforms (e.g., Zoom, Webex, Go To Meetings, etc.) and/or in-person workshops to advertise the program and provide outreach for the priority audience
 - b. Training(s) on the grant writing and application processes for funding opportunities
 - c. Individual contacts made through networking and community leaders
 - d. Email communications or listservs
 - e. Phone calls
 - f. Social media
 - g. Traditional media such as radio or television targeted to the priority geography
- b. **Provide a list of at least 10 nonprofits or local governments** that meet eligibility requirements to apply to the Trust's Capacity Building grant program,
 - a. The list shall include organization name, primary contact name, email, and phone number, documentation that the organization meets location requirements, and a description of their project interests.
- c. **Submission of at least 5 completed grant applications** to the Organizational Capacity Building Grant Program on behalf of the organizations identified in 2.2 (b).
- d. **A final report with the final invoice.** At the end of the contract term, the Connector Group shall complete a final report. The report shall be a written evaluation of the project and the method(s) used including:
 - i. Total final numbers of individuals and organizations reached, detailing which submitted grant applications, and including organizations identified that may be interested in support at a later date, but were not able to apply for a grant during the contract term.
 - ii. A description of all outreach activities completed and their results.
 - iii. Lessons learned from project period.
 - iv. Recommendations to the funding partners on how to improve the Capacity Building program RFP and application, as well as suggested strategies for outreach and engagement to the offeror's selected priority audience(s).

2.3 Qualifications and expertise:

Offeror's personnel assigned to the contract should have the following experience:

- a. Knowledge and cultural competency related to the priority audience.
- b. A history of working with the priority audience(s).
- c. Experience with the advertising methods chosen.

Offeror's organization should have the following qualifications:

- a. A minimum of three years of experience using multi-faceted outreach and engagement strategies.
- b. Demonstrated established relationships with members of the priority audience (a minimum of ten established relationships with priority audience members) and
- c. An organization mission that focuses either on the priority audience or that crosscuts that of the priority audience and natural resources (preferred).

Section III: Additional Services

3.1 Additional Services:

The Contract Officer may request ancillary or additional services within the capacity of the Contractor as may be useful or necessary in the interests of the Trust and the Project for any of the above Scopes of Work.

3.2 Add/Deduct:

The Trust reserves the right to add or remove items from the base bid proposal during the contract and modify or adjust scope of work and payment as needed.

Section IV: Proposal Format and Submission Information

4.1 Principal Solicitation Officer and Issuing Office:

Contract Officer: Amber Cameron
Telephone Number: 410-974-2941 x124
E-Mail: acameron@cbtrust.org
Address: Chesapeake Bay Trust
108 Severn Avenue
Annapolis, MD 21403

4.2 Prospective Offerors:

An "Offeror" is a person or entity that submits a proposal in response to this RFP.

4.3 Cancellation:

Discretion of Contract Officer: This RFP may be canceled in whole or in part and any proposal may be rejected in whole or in part at the discretion of the Contract Officer. In addition, the Contract Officer has the right to negotiate separately with any Offeror in any manner which will best serve the interests of the Trust. The Contract Officer may waive any mandatory condition or minimum qualification if she determines that such action is in the best interest of the Trust.

4.4 Submission Instructions/Proposal Closing Date:

Offerors must submit proposals using our Online Application System, located at: <https://us.grantrequest.com/application.aspx?sid=1520&fid=35889> **no later than 4:00 p.m. on Thursday June 26, 2025** (the "Closing Date"). Requests for extensions will not be granted, late applications will not be accepted, and the online funding opportunity will close promptly at 4:00 pm. **Offerors are strongly encouraged to submit at least a few days prior to the deadline** given potential for high website traffic on the due date. The Trust cannot guarantee availability of Online Application System technical assistance on the deadline date. If email confirmation of submission is not received within two business days, please contact the Principal Solicitation Officer listed in Section 4.1. Proposals are irrevocable for 90 days following the Closing Date.

4.5 Proposal Format:

Narrative:

The Offeror must submit a proposal that includes responses to a) through c) in a concise (≤5 pages) description. Items d), e) and f) may be addressed outside of the 5-page limit and may be attached as additional pages. All material must be submitted in one electronic file.

- a. Names of personnel providing services and number of years of experience in such areas.
- b. The Offeror's proposal for how to address the elements of the scope(s) of work and required outcomes described in the services and deliverables section (Section II above).
- c. Response to the qualifications section: a description of the experience to provide services in the topics described above as described in Section 2.3.
- d. Names, phone numbers, and email addresses of three references.
- e. The resume or CV of the individual(s) providing the service.
- f. Any other information which the Offeror considers relevant to a fair evaluation of its experience and capabilities.

Budget:

The Offeror shall submit a budget including total number of hours and hourly rate of compensation for the services to be performed during the term of the Contract broken down by direct rate, benefit rate, indirect rate, profit, and direct expenses; any additional costs required to complete the project; and total compensation. Use the Application Budget worksheet in the Financial Management Spreadsheet accessible at [Applicant Resources, Forms, & Policies - Chesapeake Bay Trust](#), and if needed, provide additional justification or explanation as an attachment to the proposal. The proposed rates of compensation will be irrevocable for a period of 90 days from the Closing Date, or if modified during negotiations, for a period of 90 days from the date such modified rates are proposed by the Offeror. Your proposed indirect rate may not be higher than 10% of the direct costs.

Subcontracting Opportunities:

If the Offeror considers subcontracting of services to be available, they should so specify, and in that case demonstrate compliance with [Good Faith Efforts](#) to engage Disadvantaged Business Enterprises.

4.6 Professional Liability Insurance:

The Offeror shall agree to maintain in full force and effect during the term of the Contract usual and customary amounts of liability insurance coverage in connection with the performance or failure to perform services under the Contract.

Section V: Evaluation Procedures

5.1 Qualifying Proposals:

The Contract Officer will review each proposal for compliance with the minimum qualifications set forth in "Offeror's Minimum Qualifications."

5.2 Deviations and Negotiation:

The Contract Officer shall have the sole right to determine whether any deviation from the requirements of this RFP is substantial in nature, and the Contract Officer may reject non-conforming proposals. In addition, the Contract Officer may waive minor irregularities in proposals, allow an Offeror to correct minor irregularities, and negotiate with responsible Offerors in any manner deemed necessary or desirable to serve the best interests of the Project.

5.3 Evaluation:

Proposals shall be evaluated by a review committee and facilitated by the Contract Officer. Evaluation will be made on the basis of the evaluation criteria discussed below and may include any oral presentation that may be required by the Contract Officer, through a recommendation by the technical review committee, at his or her discretion. The Contract Officer reserves the right to recommend an Offeror for contract award based upon the Offeror's proposal without oral presentations or further discussion. However, the Contract Officer may engage in further discussion if he or she determines that it might be beneficial. In such case, the Contract Officer will notify those responsible Offerors with whom further discussion is desired. In addition, the Contract Officer may permit qualified Offerors to revise their proposals by submitting "best and final" offers.

5.4 Evaluation Considerations:

Proposals by Offerors who meet the minimum qualifications set forth in Section II will be evaluated on the basis of the following factors:

- a) Proposed Team (Specific Individual(s) Responsible for Performance of Contract). Evaluation of the qualifications, reputation, and compatibility with needs of the Trust and the Project of the individual or individuals who will perform the Contract.
- b) Proposed Approach. Evaluation of the work to be performed to accomplish the goals outlined in the Scopes of Work in Section II.
- c) Experience of Offeror. Evaluation of the quality and quantity of the Offeror's experience and expertise in the areas proposed, supported by references.
- d) Capacity. Evaluation of the Offeror's ability and commitment to meet timeline for the Project.
- e) Price and Hours. Hourly rate and number of hours to be devoted to the project.

Section VI: Other Information

6.1 Disclosure:

Proposals submitted in response to this RFP may be provided to government agencies and be subject to disclosure pursuant to the provisions of the Access to Public Records Act of the State Government Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland (the "Public Information Act"). Offerors must specifically identify those portions of their proposals, if any, which they deem to contain confidential or proprietary information and must provide justification

for why such materials should not, upon request, be disclosed by the State under the Public Information Act.

6.2 Expenses:

The Trust and the Contract Officer are not responsible for any direct or indirect expenses which an Offeror may incur in preparing and submitting a proposal, participating in the evaluation process, or in consequence of this solicitation process for any reason.

6.3 Acceptance of Terms and Conditions:

By submitting a proposal in response to this RFP, (A) the Offeror accepts all of the terms and conditions set forth in this RFP; (B) the Offeror, if selected for award, agrees that it will comply with all federal, State, and local laws applicable to its activities and obligations under the Contract; (C) the Offeror shall be deemed to represent that it is not in arrears in the payment of any obligation due and owing the United States Government or the State or any department or unit thereof, including, without limitation, the payment of taxes and employee benefits, and, if selected for award, that it shall not become so in arrears during the term of the Contract; and (D) the Offeror, acknowledges that they are compliant with federal employment and non-discrimination laws and have not been debarred, convicted, charged or had civil judgment rendered against them for fraud or related offense by any government agency (federal, State, or local) or been terminated for cause or default by any government agency (federal, State, or local).

6.4 Disadvantaged Business Enterprise/Minority Business Enterprise (DBE/MBE)

Participation:

This RFP encourages the participation of DBE/MBE firms (members of a group as defined in the State Finance and Procurement Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland (the "Procurement Article"), Section 14-301 (f)(i)(ii)). The Trust encourages DBE/MBE firms who meet the minimum qualifications to respond to this RFP.

6.5 Parties to the Contract:

The contract to be entered into as a result of this RFP (the "Contract") shall be between the successful Offeror (the "Contractor") and the Trust and may be subject to The Green Bank and The City of Rockville approval prior to Contract award.

6.6 Contract Documents:

The Contract shall include the following documents: this RFP, the Contractor's Proposal (to the extent not inconsistent with the RFP or the Contract), and the Contract. In the event of an inconsistency, the Contract shall have priority over the other documents and specific conditions of the Contract shall have priority over General Conditions.

6.7 Contract Term:

The Contract term shall commence as of a date to be specified in the Contract and, unless sooner terminated in accordance with the Contract, shall end when all work authorized

under the Contract has been successfully completed, unless the Contract is renewed or extended at the sole option of the Contract Officer.

6.8 Billing Procedures and Compensation:

Method. The Contracts to be entered into as a result of this RFP will not exceed the small procurement threshold fixed at 41 U.S.C. 403 (11) (currently \$250,000.) The Contractor(s) must comply with billing procedures as may be required by the Contract Officer. These may entail monthly reporting of time and eligible expenses or may be based upon satisfactory completion of benchmark tasks.

Records. The Contractor(s) shall submit invoices in a form acceptable to the Contract Officer and maintain records relating to the costs and expenses incurred by the Contractor(s) in the performance of the Contracts for a period of three years from the date of final Project payment under the Contracts.

6.9 Certification:

The Offeror shall certify that, to the best of its knowledge, the price information submitted is accurate, complete, and correct as of the Closing Date, and if negotiations are conducted as of the date of "best and final offer."

6.10 Branding:

All products (outreach materials, events) will be branded the Trust logo. Products may be required to include funding partner logos on a case by case basis pending funding partner approval.