



Chesapeake Bay Trust Letter of Commitment Guidance and Policy

Definitions/Guidance

The Chesapeake Bay Trust will allow and consider Letters of Commitment in award requests (rather than letters of opinions or value judgments):

- 1) **A Letter of Commitment** is a signed letter that details the specific role and/or resource commitment from a project partner or other stakeholder for the project. The commitment may be necessary, helpful, or in some cases required for project execution (e.g., when a project hinges on a particular partner). The Letter of Commitment should be written as *"X entity agrees to provide Y resource(s) should the project be funded."*

The Letter of Commitment should only include what is being offered by the letter-writer and should avoid any opinions or value judgements of the project. The resources offered by the letter writer might be matching funds or access to property, both of which directly support the project. Examples of commitments include:

- a. landowners allowing use of their land/access to a site;
- b. a local government agreeing to assume maintenance responsibility;
- c. a partner offering data, training, time, or volunteers;
- d. a permit entity expressing likelihood of permit application success;
- e. a partner providing matching funds with a specific dollar amount committed; and/or
- f. a community group allowing the project to be done in its community and agreeing to provide community space for meetings, use of equipment, maintenance, etc.

Letters of Commitment offer direct support to the project and therefore increase the project's likely success (they DO NOT include opinions or value judgments).

- 2) **Letters of Opinion** are letters from stakeholders of a project that provide opinions and value judgements. For example, the statement, *"I advocate funding for project X for Y reasons..."*, is an opinion or value judgement about the project and is not valuable in funding decisions.

Opinions and value judgments of one project out of the context of others without offering commitment of resources to that project are not useful for reviewers in their consideration of multiple applications for funding in the award program. Examples of opinions and value judgments include:

- a. an opinion that the nonprofit doing the project does great work and a recommendation for funding;
- b. individuals expressing support for a project in a particular political area served; and/or
- c. a value judgment about the natural resource to be protected and expressed support of the project being implemented (e.g., our family canoes this river and we would like to see the project implemented).

The Chesapeake Bay Trust uses external reviewers to avoid any conflict of interest when comparing and selecting projects for funding. Letters of Opinion may impact a reviewer's view of one project in absence of reading any other proposals and therefore will not be considered.

Policy

The Chesapeake Bay Trust will only consider Letters of Commitment during application review process as of July 2018, and will not consider letters that contain opinions and/or value judgments.