



Community Engagement Mini Grant Program

FY21 Request for Proposals



Chesapeake Bay Trust

108 Severn Avenue, Annapolis, MD 21403

(410) 974 – 2941 ♦ www.cbtrust.org

Community Engagement Mini Grant Program

At A Glance

Program Summary:

This grant program is designed to engage a diverse array of organizations in activities in Maryland that both benefit communities and raise public awareness of and engagement in natural resources issues.

Deadline:

Applications are accepted on a rolling basis until funds for this fiscal year are exhausted. **The Trust must receive all applications a minimum of eight weeks prior to the start of the proposed project.** The Trust cannot provide reimbursement funding for already completed projects.

Eligible Project Locations: Maryland

Eligible Applicants:

Only applicants who have received three grants or fewer from the Trust in the past are eligible to apply. Applications are particularly encouraged from organizations who have never received a grant from the Trust. Organizations must be either a non-profit organization or a municipal, county, regional, state, or federal agency.

Request Amounts: Up to \$5,000

Submit Your Application:

Follow the instructions online at <https://cbtrust.org/grants/community-engagement/>

Contact:

Kathy Somoza at (410) 974-2941 ext. 120 or ksomoza@cbtrust.org



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Introduction

The Chesapeake Bay Trust (Trust) is a nonprofit, grant-making organization dedicated to improving the bays, streams, rivers, forests, parks, and other natural resources of our local systems, from the Chesapeake to the Coastal Bays to the Youghiogheny River. The Trust, supported in large part by Maryland's Chesapeake Bay License Plate, Plate and partnerships with other regional funders, engages and empowers diverse groups to take actions that enrich natural resources and local communities of the Chesapeake Bay region. Since 1985, the Trust has awarded over \$120 million in grants to municipalities, nonprofit organizations, schools, and public agencies throughout the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

Program Goals and Importance of Diversity and Inclusion

Through this funding opportunity, the Trust seeks to engage new applicants and organizations from a diverse array of communities in small-scale projects that enhance communities, engage residents, and, ultimately, improve natural resources.

Among the Trust's core values are diversity and inclusion: We feel that a broad range of communities can benefit from healthy natural resources, even if their primary focus is on other issues. Human health, the economy, jobs, community livability, education and our children are all connected with a healthy environment. As a result, the Trust is investing in grants primarily to new applicants who have yet to frequently engage with the Trust. Our goals are to:

1. Provide funding to groups that have traditionally been under-engaged with environmental issues, but who have a project idea that benefits both their communities and natural resources (such as native wildlife (birds, pollinators, and other species), greenery in local parks, rural or urban forests, streams, rivers, and other natural spaces);
2. Engage residents in community-based restoration and protection; and
3. Introduce the grant lifecycle to applicants who may not be experienced in applying for grants.

The Trust is committed to the advancement of diversity and inclusion in its award-making and environmental work. As a result, the Trust strongly encourages applications directly from underrepresented groups, and for projects that increase awareness and participation of communities that are traditionally underrepresented, such as communities of color. For a full description of the Trust's efforts to engage under-engaged groups, see our strategic plan at www.cbtrust.org/strategic-plan and <https://cbtrust.org/diversity-inclusion/>.

Sample Eligible Project Types

The Trust encourages projects that seek to accomplish multiple benefits, such as meeting community goals and improving environmental health.

This objective can be met through applications from organizations new to environmental work, groups engaging audiences through on-the-ground-work, and new, creative partnerships. The Trust will consider funding elements of projects that may not have a primarily environmental purpose but that have an ultimate connection or potential to improve natural resources.

Example ideal *goals* of a project proposed through this grant program may be (but are not limited to):

- Educating residents about the connection between their communities and natural resources such as wildlife, local water bodies, local parks, and trees;
- Involving new or under-engaged groups, connecting their goals with the goal to improve or protect natural resources;
- Engaging residents in community-based restoration and protection projects and encouraging behavior changes that benefit environmental health;
- Educating residents about the connection between human health and being outdoors which could be done during the implementation and maintenance of a restoration project;
- Promoting collaborative restoration solutions among multiple partners; and/or
- Encouraging organizations, when pursuing natural resource projects, to engage the communities in which they work.

Eligible project *types* include (but are not limited to):

- Projects that capture rainwater and improve wildlife habitat such as pollinator habitat plantings and rain gardens;
- Community greening projects, such as tree plantings, which have been shown to beautify communities, improve health via air quality improvement, save money due to the energy reduction value of shade, and lead to reduced crime, as well as improve stormwater;
- Community clean-ups that benefit both communities and local waterways and include education on litter impacts;
- Community gardens that combine a water quality practice, lessons about local food, and education about natural resources;
- Projects that combine art with an increased awareness of stormwater issues, such as storm drain stenciling or rain barrel installations; and/or
- Projects that educate and get residents outdoors, which have been shown to improve human health.

These are not exhaustive lists. If you have an idea that is not listed above, but potentially meets the program's goals, contact Kathy Somoza at (410) 974-2941 ext. 120, ksomoza@cbtrust.org to discuss your idea before applying.

This grant program does not support applications for school-related projects or requests for sponsorships for conferences or events.

- Applicants interested in Environmental Education projects targeting Pre-K-12 students should refer to the Mini Grant Application Package for K-12 Environmental Education requests available at <https://cbtrust.org/grants/environmental-education-mini/>.
- Requests for sponsorships for conferences and events should be submitted through the Chesapeake Bay Trust's sponsorship RFP, also found at <https://cbtrust.org/grants/sponsorship-program/>.

Projects or programs that are wholly required by a separate Federal, state, or locally issued permit, decree, or enforcement action cannot be supported through this opportunity. In some cases, the Trust may elect to fund optional portions of required projects that are in excess of regulatory requirements.

Evaluation Criteria

The following criteria will be used to by internal expert reviewers to evaluate applications under the Community Engagement Mini Grant Program:

Most Important Criteria:

- **Consistency with Requests for Proposal (RFP):** Is the project proposed consistent with the intent of the grant program? Are all required application components included for sound evaluation of the application?
- **Cost Effectiveness/Budget:** Is the budget appropriate and cost effective? Are the budget line items justified in the project narrative? Are project partners being resourced appropriately? In-kind and cash match is not required but can be included, if necessary, to accomplish project goals..
- **Likelihood of Project Success:** What is the likelihood of success if this project were to move forward? Are methodologies sound and consistent with best practices?

Important Criteria:

- **Demonstration Value:** Will others be able to take lessons from this project, and perhaps replicate it in their own communities?
- **Long-term Sustainability:** Will the project last for a long time or otherwise have lasting impact? Will additional resources be needed to maintain the value of the project, and if so, has that issue been addressed in the proposal?
- **Partnerships and Community:** Are any key partnerships required, and if so, are the selected partnerships appropriate? Are any partners missing that should have been engaged? Is the community to be served involved appropriately in the project, i.e., was community buy-in obtained, were community needs and desires assessed, and are there individual(s) in the community committed to serving as community leads? If the lead applicant is not a member of the community served by the project (e.g., an external non-profit doing work on land owned by another entity, such as a health providing facility), is a transfer of “ownership” to the community built into the project and the ability of the community to carry the work forward developed?

Additional Criteria to be Considered:

- **General Quality of Application:** What is the level of completeness and attention to detail?
- **Supporting Documents:** Does the application include appropriate attachments? For on-the-ground projects, are a site plan, site photos, a native plant list, and a maintenance plan included?

Eligible Applicants

Only applicants who have received three grants or fewer from the Trust in the past are eligible to apply. Applications are particularly encouraged from organizations who have never received a grant from the Trust. If unsure of your organization’s eligibility, contact Kathy Somoza at ksomoza@cbtrust.org or (410) 974-2941 ext. 120 prior to applying.

The Trust welcomes requests from the following organizations:

- 501(c)3 Private Nonprofits;
- Faith-based;
- Community Associations;
- Service and Civic Groups; and/or
- Municipal, County, Regional, State, Federal Public Agencies.

Need a mentor for this application? The Trust offers a mentorship opportunity to new applicants. If you are in need of a mentor to assist you in applying to this grant program, see a list of willing mentors, a description of how the mentor can help you with this application, and a description of the mentorship opportunity at <https://cbtrust.org/community-engagement/>.

Funding Availability and Timeline

Funding Availability: The Trust anticipates funds available in FY21 of up to \$170,000.

Project Timeline: Projects must be completed within 12 months upon receipt of the award. Requests to extend project completion period will be reviewed and considered on a case-by-case basis. When a project is complete, grantees are required to submit a completed final report from with supporting materials/products.

Deadline

Proposals for Community Engagement Mini Grant Program requests are accepted on an on-going basis until funds are fully expended for the given fiscal year; visit the grant program's website at <https://cbtrust.org/community-engagement/> and sign up for our [grantee newsletter](#) for the most up to date information about the status of this rolling program.

The Trust must receive all proposals at least EIGHT weeks prior to the start of the proposed project. For example, if you were to submit on September 1st, 2020, the earliest that your project may start is November 26th, 2020. The Trust cannot make exceptions to this policy.

Application Review Process

All submitted applications are scored by technical experts in the field supported by this RFP. Reviewers score all applications based on the evaluation criteria listed in the above "Evaluation Criteria" section.

The Trust reserves the right to fund projects and budget items that advance our mission and meet specific funding priorities and criteria.

To allow applicants to set expectations prior to investing time in application, the Trust provides historical application approval rates for the same or similar programs. The average approval rate from the last three rounds (years) in this grant program is 70%; this includes both fully and partially funded applications.

Awards and Notifications

All applicants will receive a letter stating the Trust's decision. An application may be declined, partially awarded, or fully awarded. If approved, the Trust will send an award agreement with award conditions and due dates of status, progress, and final reports. The Trust will mail the full award payment to the requesting organization following: satisfaction of any award contingencies, including upload of the signed award agreement. In cases where the awardee fails to submit a final report by the due date, the Trust reserves the right to terminate the award agreement and require a refund of funds already transferred to the awardee.

When the project is complete, awardees are required to complete final reports and submit final products and supporting materials for the project. Organizations with outstanding final, progress, or status reports will not be awarded additional grants.

Contact

For technical assistance contact Kathy Somoza at (410) 974-2941 x 120 or ksomoza@cbtrust.org.

Narrative Questions

You will upload a MS Word or PDF file not to exceed five (5) pages of text, excluding photos or materials such as Letter(s) of Commitment, that address the following questions. **To ensure that you address all questions, we recommend that you copy and paste the questions and use them as an outline in your narrative.** Additional file attachments can be uploaded, not to exceed a total of four file attachments per application. Use the additional "Upload" options in the online system.

- 1. Goals and Objectives:** What are the big-picture goals and the specific objectives of the project? Provide a detailed explanation about what your project will do to meet the goals of this Requests for Proposal (RFP).
- 2. Background:** Describe the background of the project. Why is this project needed? How was this project identified?
- 3. Audience:** Identify the priority audience you will educate or engage and describe how you will reach them and why you chose that method.
- 4. Demographic Information:** In light of the Trust's commitment to the advancement of diversity in its award-making, provide demographic information about the community or population involved in or served by the project.
 - Provide your organization's experience working within the specific communities that you will be prioritizing.
 - If you have not had significant experience within your prioritized demographic, explain how you intend to address this issue; the Trust encourages applicants to establish partnerships with local organizations that may have greater cultural competencies within the targeted demographic(s).
- 5. Demonstration Value:** Describe how this project might be used as a model in other areas? How might lessons learned from this project be transferred to others? For on-the-ground projects, describe the project location(s), why it/they were selected, and how visible to others the project will be.
- 6. Sustainability:** The Trust aims to invest in projects that have the longest potential longevity, after the grant period is over. Several threats exist that may result in loss of project value: change in public interest in an effort, changes in rainfall or sea level associated with climate change; change in land use; and more.
 - Discuss the future you see for the work for which you are requesting funds. What factors may affect its long-term value and how will you ensure its long-term value is maximized?
 - If the project or program will need ongoing financial resources in order to maintain its value, provide an abbreviated plan describing how the project will be sustained beyond the term of the proposed funding request.
- 7. Community context:** The best projects will connect to other existing community watershed stewardship efforts.
 - Indicate how this project fits into other watershed stewardship activities occurring in the community. For example, are neighboring health providing facilities or homeowner's associations who may already be undertaking environmental activities going to be engaged in this project?

8. **Staying safe during coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic:** Considering the current COVID-19 pandemic, how will your project address this obstacle to safely conduct the work outlined in this application?
9. **Contractors:** Has/will a contractor be hired and has a contractor been selected? Describe your contractor/consultant selection process, including justification and background of the selected contractor/consultant. If using a bid process, describe the process.
 - The Trust strongly recommends that applicants get at least three cost estimates or quotes from three service providers.
 - If you anticipate using a contractor, indicate in your proposal that at least three cost estimates or quotes will be obtained.
10. **Experience:** Briefly describe your organization’s experience completing similar projects.
11. **Evaluation:** Describe how you will assess the effectiveness of your project. How will you collect information to refine and improve your project and assess the number of people who increased their knowledge?
12. **Mentorship Program:** Did you participate in the Community Engagement Mentorship Program?
 - If yes, who was your Mentor/Mentee organization?
 - For Mentee: What role did your Mentor play (project development assistance, narrative creation, application submission assistance, etc.) and about how much time did its staff spend assisting you?

Upload the required documentations for projects: Are the following items included in your application where applicable?

- *Required for Restoration-type Projects:*
 - Site plan/project design that includes species, area, spacing, etc.
 - Native plant list. Funds may be requested for native plant species only.
 - Photo of the site.
 - A detailed maintenance plan for short-term (first growing season) and long-term (three years) maintenance. Applicants proposing work on private property should have a particularly strong maintenance description. Proposals that demonstrate long-term commitment to keep and maintain the project will receive more favorable review.
 - Permits or other approvals: If permits or any other type of approvals are required, describe the status (e.g., permits pending review of application, permits secured).
 - Letters of Commitment. To better understand the Trust’s definition of letter of commitment, visit the “Other Important Documents and Forms” section on our Forms and Policies webpage: <https://cbtrust.org/forms-policies/>.
- *Recommended for Outreach-type Projects:*
 - For workshops include a draft agenda.
 - List of knowledge objectives; tell us what participants will learn from your project
 - Letters of commitment. To better understand the Trust’s definition of letter of commitment, visit the “Other Important Documents and Forms” section on our Forms and Policies webpage: <https://cbtrust.org/forms-policies/>.

Budget Instructions

Financial Management Spreadsheet – Application Budget Upload

You will be asked to upload your budget using the “Application Budget” worksheet of the Chesapeake Bay Trust’s **Financial Management Spreadsheet (FMS)**, an excel file template. The template can be found by

visiting <https://cbtrust.org/forms-policies/> where you can also watch a video with instructions on how to complete the FMS.

For your budget request:

- Budgets that are detailed, justified, and itemized are ideal.
- For any staff cost requests, list the percentage of overall time devoted to the project by each staff member in the budget item column. It is expected that all personnel included in budgets will be directly involved in the work conducted under this program. Requests that do not include full justification for personnel involved may not be fully funded.
- Matching/leveraged resources are encouraged. Indicate whether each match entry is applied for, pledged, or in-hand. Indicate in the narrative whether your organization has requested financial support from any other sources for the project not listed as match in the budget submitted.
- The Trust cannot provide reimbursement funding for already completed projects.

Financial Management Spreadsheet – Application Budget Information

This online application component will ask you to enter budget category and request totals. These totals will be automatically calculated in the FMS Application Budget, so you will only need to copy and paste the values from the FMS to the online application.

Additional Budget Justification

This online application component will ask you to provide a descriptive budget narrative to justify and explain costs. such as: 1) if you requested staff costs (personnel/staff that are in your organization) you must provide a detailed justification for those staff costs that includes a scope of work for the staff costs requested, tasks for the scope of work, and hours associated with those tasks and 2) the source of any contractor cost estimates. Staff cost requests that are not fully justified will not be funded. If awarded, you will be required to provide timesheets for all staff time used during the project.

The body of work described in your proposal should be able to be accomplished with the resources requested in your budget. If the success of the work is contingent upon award of other funds, make this clear in your budget justification section.

Online Application Submission Instructions

The Trust uses an online system for the application process, and if awarded, project management. Watch our video on how to apply for and submit an application using our online system at <https://cbtrust.org/grants/>.

To apply for an award:

1. Go to <https://cbtrust.org/grants/community-engagement/> and click on “Start a New Application”
2. Log in with the email address and password of the Project Leader for the proposed project.
 - a. If you have applied in the past, use your existing username and password (if you have forgotten either of these use the ‘forgot password’ feature).
 - b. If you have not used our online system before, click on “New Applicant” and follow the instructions.

By submitting an application to this program, applicants acknowledge that: 1) they are compliant with federal employment and non-discrimination laws and 2) they have not been debarred, convicted, charged or had a 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). In addition, all final products will be provided to the Trust for use and distribution at the sole discretion of the Trust.

Online Application Form

You will be asked to provide the following information on the online application form. Some items are required in order to submit your application. Refer to the online application for details.

- Eligibility Quiz
 - This three-question quiz is meant to assist you in determining if your project meets the requirements of this award program and that your staff/organizational structure best supports a successful application.

- Applicant Information Tab
 - Provide the organization's name, mailing address, phone number, organization type, mission, EIN number, and DUNS number.
 - Provide the Executive Officer and Project Leader's name, title, address, phone, and email address.
 - Both an Executive Officer and a Project Leader, two separate individuals, must be identified for all applications.
 - The Executive Officer and Project Leader must both be able to make decisions on behalf of the organization either as a board member, an employee, or other approved position recognized by the organization but not a contractor of the application.
 - The Project Leader will be responsible for all project coordination and correspondence with the Trust for the duration of the project. **The email address entered here MUST be the same as the email address you used to log in to the online system.** The Project Leader is the primary point of contact for the application, and the email address used to submit the application via the online system must be that of the Project Leader. Applications in which the email address associated with the Project Leader in the applicant information tab of the online opportunity does not match the email address used to submit the application will not be considered for funding. The Trust cannot conduct any official correspondence with contractors or other project partners. If at any time the Project Leader cannot continue in the position, the organization must contact the Trust and assign a new qualified Project Leader.
 - To avoid conflict of interest issues, individuals associated with for-profit entities to be engaged in the project cannot serve in either role.

- Project Information Tab
 - Provide a project title; project abstract; the watershed, county, and legislative district in which the project is located; the latitude and longitude coordinates of the project location; and how you heard about the Community Engagement Mini Grant Program.

- Timeline Tab
 - Add your project start and end date. Provide a project timeline that includes major tasks and their associated start and end dates.

- Deliverables Tab
 - Provide estimated metrics for your proposed project such as project participants and outreach and restoration outcomes. Only complete those deliverables that are appropriate for your project (i.e., some deliverables will not apply).

- Volunteers Tab
 - Provide a description of volunteer activities, the number of volunteers, and total number of volunteer hours.

- Project Partnerships
 - Provide a list of project partner organizations or contractors, individuals, their areas of expertise, and their role(s) in your project.
 - Applicants are encouraged to upload a Letter of Commitment for the project from each partner describing in detail the partner’s role or contribution to the project. Applications including strong Letter(s) of Commitment often receive higher scores. If not submitted with the application, Letter(s) of Commitment may be required prior to the release of any awarded funding. To better understand the Trust’s definition of and policy on Letter(s) of Commitment, visit our Forms and Policies webpage: <https://cbtrust.org/forms-policies/>.

- Narrative & Supporting Documents Tab
 - Upload a Microsoft Word or PDF file that contains your answers to the narrative questions found in the Narrative Questions section of this RFP. Upload additional supporting documents, if needed/required.

- Budget Tab
 - Upload your application budget, provide budget category and request totals, and provide additional budget justification. Use the Trust’s Financial Management Spreadsheet and fill out the “Application Budget” worksheet. Refer to the Budget Instructions of this RFP.
 - Provide the total amount of funding requested and amount of funding requested for each budget category, for cash and in-kind match totals, and for any contractual costs requested. These values should match your “Application Budget” of the Financial Management Spreadsheet.

- Terms and Conditions Tab
 - Agree to the specified terms and conditions for the program for which you are applying.

Appendix A: Guidelines for Project Types

Review the guidelines for specific project types below as you prepare a Community Engagement Mini Grant application. Contact the Trust for assistance with any of these guidelines for project types and we will be happy to assist you in project planning and application submission. Additional resources can be found here: <https://cbtrust.org/additional-resources/>.

Greening/Garden Projects

- All planting projects **must** include a plant list, site plan, project design, photo of the site where planting/restoration is proposed, and a detailed maintenance plan.
- List of native plants that will be used in the planting/restoration project in the application. For non-edible projects, only native plants may be used. Funds may be requested for native plant species only.
- Projects can be completed on public property, property owned by non-profit organizations, community-owned property, and other property with conservation easements or signed long-term protection agreements.
- For projects planned on properties other than that of the applicant and/or private property, attach a letter of commitment stating that permission has been granted by the entity owning the land on which the project will be completed. Applications that demonstrate long-term commitment (> three years) to upkeep, manage, and maintain the project will receive more favorable review. Projects planned on private property must have a high demonstration value for the site to be a fit into the Community Engagement Mini Grant Program.
- Requests for invasive vegetation removal as part of site preparation for native planting projects are allowed.

Publication, Printing, and Electronic Media Projects

- Publication projects supporting the full scope of the Trust’s activities are welcome. The ultimate project goal must be to help individuals take actions that can benefit the environment, community health, and rivers and streams. The message should be consistent with the mission of the requesting organization.
- Applicants must explain how the project and materials fulfill an unmet need for information that does not duplicate existing materials. Include a review of existing similar types of publications; explain what is new about your materials and associated communications campaign. Applications that do not place a project in the context of existing materials will not be considered.
- The target audience must be clearly defined and how the audience is expected to use the information must be articulated.
- The publication’s distribution plan must be completed before the application is submitted and included with the application. This plan should include information such as:
 - a. Why the specific medium (web, print, other) was chosen to reach the target audience;
 - b. The number of copies to be produced;
 - c. How the product will be advertised to the target audience (for example, if a new resource will be posted on your website, explain the plan to drive the target audience to the website); and

- d. Fees that may be involved (applicant is not permitted to charge for project components funded by the Trust, such as charging for a publication that Trust resources are supporting).
- Applicants proposing print media are strongly encouraged to make an electronic copy of the publication available on a public website.
- For web-distributed footage, applicants must secure all required digital distribution rights.

Workshops and Trainings

- Applicants must describe the knowledge objectives for project participants as it relates to natural resources and/or water quality education.
- A priority audience and number of attendees must be identified in the application, as well as a recruitment strategy based on assessment of the priority audience identified.
- A list of speakers, their qualifications, and a draft agenda should be provided in the application. If unknown at the time of application, submission of these supporting documents will be a contingency of an award.
- The Trust will consider speaker fees on a case by case basis. Applicants should clearly identify the speaker(s) for which funds are requested and list a rate per hour for the speaker in the budget.
- The Trust encourages applicants holding workshops or trainings to evaluate audience knowledge and self-efficacy with a combination of survey or other similar tools. The grantee must share results of the evaluation with the Trust and outline next steps resulting from the workshop or training in the final report.

Water Quality Monitoring Projects

The Trust will consider monitoring projects in certain cases: (a) when data will be used to target future restoration projects; (b) when data will be used to increase public awareness of watershed issues, for example, in a “State of the Watershed” report; (c) when monitoring data will be used to help create or refine a watershed management plan; and (d) when data will be used to address land use issues on a large-scale, in a way that will help local governments advance best management practices. In the latter case, Letters of Commitment from local governments are required. For all cases:

- Identify the purpose of the monitoring (i.e., which of the above four cases apply to your project).
- Describe who will use the data and how it will be used.
- Describe the monitoring protocol to be followed, including how sites were or will be selected for monitoring, what parameters will be measured, the methods and equipment for sampling, and the frequency of monitoring.
- Explain how the monitoring project provides new data or information not already understood. Put the project in the context of any existing state or federal monitoring programs.
- Preference will be given to monitoring projects that engage volunteers.
- We strongly recommend that water quality monitoring, Watershed Report Card, and State of the River Report projects follow water quality monitoring methodology recommendations established by the Mid Atlantic Tributary Assessment Coalition (MTAC) led by the University of Maryland. Contact the Trust for more information or to obtain a copy of the monitoring protocol document.