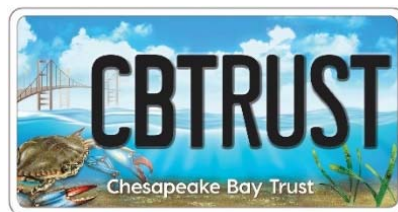




Outdoor Learning Network Initiative

FY 22 Request for Proposals



Chesapeake Bay Trust

108 Severn Avenue, Annapolis, MD 21403

(410) 974 – 2941 ♦ www.cbtrust.org

Outdoor Learning Network Initiative

At A Glance

Program Summary:

The Outdoor Learning Network Initiative is a capacity building opportunity designed to establish local networks of school districts and local organizations who are committed to working collectively to advance environmental literacy.

Deadline:

Thursday, August 19, 2021, at 4:00 PM EST

Eligible Project Locations:

This program funds projects throughout the Chesapeake Bay watershed, including MD, DE, DC, PA, VA, and WV.

Request Amounts:

Once selected networks will have the opportunity to submit collaborative scopes of work for funding up to \$150,000 for a two-year period.

Submit Your Application:

Follow the instructions online at https://www.GrantRequest.com/SID_1520?SA=SNA&FID=35437.

Contact:

Emily Stransky, Program Officer, 410-974-2941 ext. 101
EStransky@cbtrust.org

Tara Drennan, Senior Program Officer, 410-974-2941 ext. 102, TDrennan@cbtrust.org

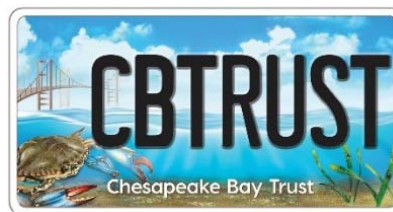


Table of Contents

Introduction	3
Program Goals	3
OLNI Assistance Provided	4
Evaluation Criteria	5
Eligible Applicants	5
Timeline	6
Deadlines	6
Application Review Process	6
Awards and Notifications	6
Contact	6
Narrative Questions	7
Budget Instructions	8
Online Application Submission Instructions	8
Appendix A: OLNI Steering Committee	10

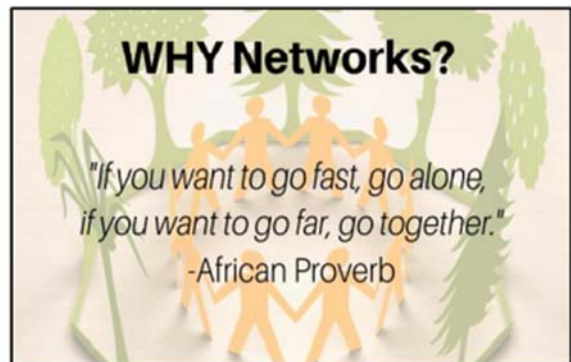
Introduction to the Chesapeake Bay Trust

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 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

The Outdoor Learning Network Initiative (OLNI) is a capacity building opportunity designed to advance environmental literacy by establishing local networks comprised of school districts and organizations who are committed to partnering and working collectively to embed environmental education into the school system long-term. OLNI awardees are committed to becoming a network of stakeholders with a shared vision and collaborative action that will maximize impact, leverage expertise and resources, spur innovation, increase efficiency, and accelerate progress.

Through this opportunity, funding and technical assistance is provided to grow new and existing partnerships of school districts and local organizations into a local network focused on ensuring every student in their district graduates environmentally and civically literate. OLNI supports a range of activities that advance environmental literacy including but not limited to embedding systemic programs, operationalizing ongoing teacher training, designing environmental literacy plans, developing community-based partnerships, and engaging leadership. For OLNI it is less about the what, and more about the who, why, and how. Applicants must be a team of school district(s) and local organization(s) excited to become a local network, the team must be able to meet the time commitment of trainings and network meetings, and a systemic environmental literacy program based on the Meaningful Watershed Education Experience (MWEE) must be one of the network's collaborative projects. Priority is also given to districts with environmental, educational, and demographic indicators of need.



The Initiative will provide training and ongoing support from the Chesapeake Bay Foundation and other partners from the OLNI Steering Committee and direct funding to be distributed over a two-year period to selected local networks. The OLNI Steering Committee and OLNI is supported by the Trust and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and working closely with the Chesapeake Bay Program Education Workgroup.

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/>.

OLNI Assistance Provided

Applicants do not request funds for specific projects via this Request for Proposals (RFP); instead applicants outline their needs, readiness, and commitment to participate in this Initiative. Applicants selected to participate in this initiative will receive customized training and ongoing support to (1) build a local network comprised of a set of groups (school district(s) and organizations) who are committed to partnering and working collectively to advance environmental literacy and (2) develop a shared environmental literacy plan and coordinated strategies and programs including a systemic MWEE at each school district in the local network over a two-year period. Once selected, a grant opportunity will be available to networks to support environmental literacy planning efforts, development of collaborative programs, as well as targeted capacity building activities.

Several types of resources will be made available to applicants selected to participate in this initiative. These resources and associated estimated time commitments are detailed below:

Network Meetings and Technical Assistance: Local networks will receive ongoing support throughout the two-year period. In year one the contractor will schedule meetings every other month with the local networks to build on the themes from the trainings and help guide the refinement of the MWEEs for the respective school districts. These meetings will aid in the design and delivery of teacher trainings and the systemic MWEEs. In year two local networks will schedule regular meetings and the contractor will serve as a consultant to ensure continuity of projects support and communication. This will allow local network members to address issues with MWEE implementation, provide support for existing partners, and address the needs for continuing to train new teachers and partners. Applicants should anticipate attending a minimum of 6 network meetings over the course of each year.

An Environmental Literacy Planning and Capacity Building Grant (up to approximately \$150,000): Once selected, networks will have the opportunity to submit collaborative scopes of work for funding. Scopes of work will be submitted and administered by an organization working in the region on behalf of the local network. Funds could support but are not limited to assessment and planning to inform a shared environmental literacy plan; projects to diversify network membership; and seed funding for the systemic MWEE program or other projects focused on advancing the developing environmental literacy plan. Funds may not cover full costs of environmental literacy plan implementation but will provide startup support. Collaborative members will be encouraged to seek additional funds from other sources to expand implementation of plan strategies.

Trainings: Selected networks will participate in three types of trainings through two different contractors. (1) Trainings on the MWEE as a pedagogy; (2) depending on the specific needs of program participants, the Initiative will provide training sessions, workshops, and peer learning opportunities on various topics related to needs and strategies of the networks; and (3) work with contractor to co-develop a five-day summer professional development course for summer 2022. The 5-day summer courses will model field-based issue investigations that support the MWEE model. These training and information sharing sessions will be scheduled independently and in combination where possible. Applicants should anticipate attending a minimum of six trainings and/or information sharing sessions over the course of the first year.

Third party collaborative assessments and services: Networks will be aided in identifying needs and specific actions focused on establishing a shared agenda, analyzing collective strengths, gaps in capacities, who is missing from the collaborative, and increasing their collaborative sustainability. This will inform the training and technical assistance offered via third-party contractor(s). While the time commitment associated with assessment efforts will be driven in part by network members, it is anticipated that network members will complete the assessment a minimum of three times with the network contractors.

Evaluation Criteria

The following criteria will be used by reviewers to score your proposal:

- 1) School District Need assessed in three ways (40 points):
 1. Does the applicant describe in detail the challenges and needs in advancing environmental literacy goals?
 2. Does the applicant describe how participation in OLNi would help address those challenges and needs?
 3. Does the applicant demonstrate environmental, educational, and demographic indicators of need in the school districts being served? Reviewers will use existing data gathered from the ELIT Survey (administered every two years to assess and track the status and progress of environmental literacy planning and activities in the region) and the EJ Screen Mapper (maintained by the EPA and includes demographic and environmental data to ensure vulnerable communities can be readily identified and targeted) to assess need.

- 2) Readiness and Commitment of School districts and lead partners (35 points):
 - a. Level of commitment demonstrated by the school districts and partners in the narrative and letters of commitment to participate in OLNi's assistance offerings including the collaborative assessments, trainings, and technical assistance and network over the two-year grant period.
 - b. Level of commitment demonstrated by the school districts and partners in the narrative and letters of commitment to develop OLNi collaborative projects including drafting an environmental literacy plan, teacher professional development trainings, and systemic MWEE (identifying curricular connection, grade level, standards, program design, and implementation) over the two-year grant period. For those school districts that have already identified this information prior to submission please describe how these selections were made and the justification for the selections.
 - c. Has lead staff been identified at each of the school districts and partner organizations to participate in the trainings and operations of the local network?
 - d. Level of commitment demonstrated by the school districts and partner leads in the narrative and letters of commitment to ensure sustainability of the local network after the two-year period.

- 3) Leadership Support (25 points):
 - a. Demonstrated by a letter of recommendation from the superintendents of the participating school district(s).

Eligible Applicants

The Trust and NOAA welcome requests from the following organizations:

- ◆ The Trust seeks applications from groups of school district(s) and local organizations in the Chesapeake Bay region. It is preferred that a school district is the entity that applies, but a local partner is eligible to be the applicant with justification for why it is better that they, and not a school district, applies.
- ◆ Priority will be given to applicants who demonstrate need through a combination of environmental, educational, and demographic indicators as outlined in the Narrative Questions section.

Timeline

Timeline: The OLN timeline will be from November 1, 2021 to October 31, 2023. Requests to extend the completion period will be reviewed and considered on a case-by-case basis.

The first year is dedicated to training and technical assistance from third-party contractors and other OLN Steering Committee members, building partnerships among local network members, and designing a systemic environmental literacy program based on the MWEE model. The second year is dedicated to ongoing support and technical assistance from third-party contractors and other OLN Steering Committee members, piloting teacher professional development trainings and the systemic MWEE with students, building a healthy network structure for long-term success, and implementing other projects prioritized by the local network.

Deadline

Application Submission Deadline: Applicants must submit applications in the **Chesapeake Bay Trust Online System** by **4:00 PM EST on August 19th, 2021**. Late applications will not be accepted, and the online funding opportunity will close automatically and promptly at 4 PM EST. Applicants are strongly encouraged to submit at least a few days prior to the deadline given the potential for high website traffic on the due date. The Trust cannot guarantee availability of technical assistance for our online system on the deadline date.

Application Review Process

Each application is reviewed by a technical external peer review committee, called the Technical Review Committee (TRC), composed of individuals who are experts in the fields supported by this RFP and represent communities served by projects funded by this RFP. The TRC ranks and scores all applications based on the criteria listed in the "Evaluation Criteria" section above, then meets to discuss the application merits. The TRC then notifies the Trust's Board of Trustees on the suite of applications and award decisions.

The funding partners reserve the right to award proposals that advance their missions and meet specific funding priorities and criteria.

Awards and Notifications

All applicants will receive a letter stating the funding partnership'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.

When the term is complete, awardees are required to complete final reports. Organizations with outstanding final, progress, or status reports will not be awarded additional grants.

The FY22 Outdoor Learning Network Initiative awards will be announced September 2021.

Contact

For technical assistance contact Tara Drennan at (410) 974-2941 x102, TDrennan@cbtrust.org or Emily Stransky at (410) 974-2941 x101, EStransky@cbtrust.org.

Narrative Questions

You will be asked to upload a Word or PDF file addressing the following points, as well as relevant information that pertains to the OLNI Assistance Provided section of this Request for Proposals (RFP). We recommend that you copy and paste the questions below into a Word document to use as an outline for your narrative, ensuring that you have addressed all necessary questions. Make sure that your answers describe how the criteria in the “Evaluation Criteria” section of the RFP will be met.

1) Need: Please describe the need for this work? Specifically address the following.

- a. Describe the challenges and needs in advancing environmental literacy at the school district(s) in your proposed local network.
- b. Describe what support and resources are needed to address those challenges and needs.
- c. Describe how participation in OLNI would help address those challenges and needs.
- d. Provide Indicators of Need in the School Districts being served:
 - i. Environmental Education:
 1. Number of outdoor environmental education programs currently being delivered at the school district(s) in your proposed network.
 2. Number of MWEEs currently being delivered at the school district(s) in your proposed network. Please note if the MWEEs are systemic or not (systemic means across an entire grade level within a school district).
 - ii. Demographic (if you need a resource this information can be found on [EPA’s EJ Screen](#)):
 1. Percent Low-Income.
 2. Percent People of Color.
 3. Percent of population with less than high school education.
 4. Percent linguistically isolated population.
 5. Provide percent of Title 1 and Title 1 eligible schools.
 - iii. Please list any Environmental Indicators found on the [EPA’s EJ Screen](#) that you think are pertinent to understanding the communities that will be served by your local network.
 - iv. Feel free to list any other indicators of need not listed above that you think are pertinent to understanding the communities that will be served by your local network.

2) Readiness and Commitment:

- a. Describe your ability for meeting the time commitments over the two-year grant period for participating in (1) the OLNI offerings described in the OLNI Assistance Provided section including the trainings, assessments, technical assistance, and network meetings, (2) a local network comprised of school districts and organizations who are committed to partnering and working collectively to advance environmental literacy, and (3) the local network’s collaborative projects including a systemic MWEE (identifying curricular connection, grade level, standards, program design, and implementation), teacher professional development trainings (design and delivery), and others as determined by the local network as a collective. *Also provide letters of commitment from each local network member as attachments to the application confirming their ability for meeting the time commitments required for participating in OLNI.*
- b. Provide a brief description of each of the local network members experience and value to being part of the local network. Please include history of previous or existing partnerships between any of the network members.
- c. Provide the points of contact (leads and key staff with a short description of their qualifications) for the local network members.

- d. Describe how your organization and the local network members will ensure sustainability of the local network after the two-year period.

3) Leadership Support: What is the level of commitment from the leadership of the participating school districts to participating in the OLN offerings, establishing a local network to advance environmental literacy at the district level, and embed systemic environmental literacy programs into school districts? *Also provide a letter of support from the superintendents at the participating school district(s). Letters should designate a key contact to serve as a representative on the local network, commitment to integrating environmental literacy into district curriculum, and a commitment to the long-term sustainability of the local network.*

Budget Instructions

Note a budget will not be submitted as part of the application. Once selected networks will have the opportunity to submit collaborative scopes of work for funding (up to approximately \$150,000). Scopes of work will be submitted and administered by an organization working in the region on behalf of the local network. Funds could support but are not limited to assessment and planning to inform a shared environmental literacy plan; projects to diversify network membership; and seed funding for the systemic MWEE program or other projects focused on advancing the developing environmental literacy plan.

Online Application Submission Instructions

The Trust uses an online system for the application process, and if awarded, project management. To apply for an award, go to <https://cbtrust.org/grants/oln/> and click on “Get Started” to begin a new application. This will open a new window asking you to log in or create an account on our online system. 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). If you have not used our online system before, click on “New Applicant” and follow the instructions.

Applicants must submit applications in the **Chesapeake Bay Trust Online System** by **4:00 pm on August 19, 2021**. Late applications will not be accepted, and the online funding opportunity will close promptly at 4:00 pm.

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 funding partners for use and distribution at the sole discretion of the funding partners.

Watch our video on how to apply for and submit an application using our online system at <https://cbtrust.org/grants/>.

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; and the latitude and longitude coordinates of the project location.

- Project Partnerships
 - Provide a list of project partner organizations or contractors, individuals, their areas of expertise, and their role(s) in your local network.
 - 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 local network. 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: www.cbtrust.org/forms.

- 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. See narrative questions section for the letters of commitment that are required for this opportunity.

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

Appendix A: OLNI Steering Committee Members

As noted in the Outdoor Learning Network Assistance Provided section, OLNI participants will be supported by a team of funders and contractors over the two-year period who serve as part of the OLNI Steering Committee in coordination with the Chesapeake Bay Program Education Workgroup. Below is a description of each of the OLNI Steering Committee Members:

Chesapeake Bay Trust is a nonprofit grant-making organization dedicated to improving the watersheds of the Chesapeake Bay, Maryland Coastal Bays, and Youghiogheny River. The Trust's mission is to engage and empower diverse groups to take actions that enrich natural resources and communities of the Chesapeake Bay region. Since the Trust's inception in 1985 environmental education has been a key strategy in accomplishing its mission and a core component of the Trust's grant portfolio. The MWEE is the foundation of the Trust's environmental education portfolio and has supported MWEEs from the classroom to the district level. The Trust also supports efforts to build capacity in the environmental education community and has co-developed several environmental education resources including the Educators Guide to the MWEE.

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration has supported the development of model MWEEs in school districts throughout the watershed, reaching over half a million students through more than 200 grants since 2002. The agency also maintains the Environmental Science Training Center focused on professional training related to watershed education. NOAA oversees environmental literacy policy, planning, and implementation for the Chesapeake Bay Program, co-developed the Educators Guide to the MWEE, and maintains Bay Backpack (online educator resource for watershed education).

Chesapeake Bay Foundation is a recognized leader in environmental literacy. CBF brings expertise in professional development and experience in developing systemic environmental literacy curriculum in partnership with some of the largest school districts in the U.S. Among other projects, CBF initiated and led the Maryland Environmental Literacy Partnership, which created curriculum and provided teacher training for 11 of Maryland's 24 districts, concurrently. CBF convened the National Panel on Environmental Literacy and designed the Environmental Literacy Model. CBF co-developed the Educator's Guide to the MWEE and serves as a lead training organization. CBF draws on over 45 years of practicing environmental education and professional development in districts in the Chesapeake region.

Local Concepts is a women-owned, small business enterprise that specializes in network development and network management support. For this project, Christy Gabbard will be the project lead bringing 25 years of experience in network building, community organizing, project management, and natural resource management. Sonia Keiner, a consultant with Local Concepts, has 20 years of experience in community building, non-formal and formal environmental education program development, network and organizational management, and strategic and creative communications.