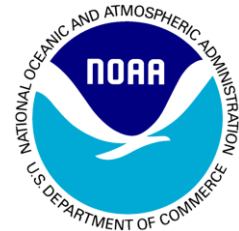




Outdoor Learning Network Initiative - Network Leadership Course Proposals

FY 24 Request for Proposals



Chesapeake Bay Trust

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Outdoor Learning Network Initiative – Network Leadership Course

At A Glance

Program Summary:

The Outdoor Learning Network Initiative (OLNI) is a capacity building opportunity designed to establish local networks of school districts and local organizations who are committed to working collaboratively to advance environmental literacy. The Network Leadership Course is a component of OLNI and assists environmental education providers in increasing their ability to develop sustainable partnerships with school districts and other local partners to advance environmental literacy at the school district level.

Deadline:

Thursday, May 30th, 2024, at 4:00 PM EST

Eligible Project Locations:

This program can fund organizations located in the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

Request Amounts:

Requests up to \$10,000.

Submit Your Application:

Follow the instructions online at

https://www.grantrequest.com/SID_1520?SA=SNA&FID=35727

Contact:

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

Introduction and Program Goals

The Outdoor Learning Network Initiative (OLNI) is a capacity building opportunity designed to advance environmental literacy by establishing local networks of school districts and organizations who are committed to partnering and working collectively to embed environmental education into the school system long-term. An essential component of OLNI is the **Network Leadership Course** (Course). The Course engages environmental education providers, through a year-long community, to increase their ability to develop deep and mutually beneficial partnerships with school district leaders and other local organizations that lead to creating systemic, equitable, and sustainable environmental literacy programs.

Learning Objectives: through the Course, participants will expand their knowledge and understanding of:

1. Models of collaboration that advance systemic, equitable, and sustainable environmental literacy programs,
2. How a network approach can help organizations evolve from a provider to a thought partner with school systems,
3. How environmental literacy programming can be integrated into curriculum in school districts, and
4. Strategies to achieve financial and programmatic sustainability through new models of collaboration with school districts.

Participants in the Course include environmental education providers who are proficient in leading [Meaningful Watershed Educational Experiences](#) (MWEEs) and are interested in learning about and sharing strategies to initiate and sustain systemic environmental literacy programs with school district partners.

The Course will take place from September 1, 2024, to June 30, 2025. Participating organizations will commit to:

1. Two to three staff members consistently attending three in-person and three virtual sessions (dates to be decided collaboratively). Staff member teams should include at least one person who has decision-making authority and one person who is responsible for program design. At least one,

but up to three, of the in-person sessions will be in Annapolis, MD. In-person meetings are anticipated in the early fall of 2024, winter of 2024/2025, and spring of 2025. Virtual meetings are anticipated in the winter of 2024/2025 and spring of 2025.

2. Recruiting a school district-level partner representative to join a full day meeting in the winter of 2024/2025,
3. Completing all planned pre- and post- work (approximately 30 hours of asynchronous work), and
4. Designing a final plan to implement course content.

OLNI is supported by the Trust, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), and Chesapeake Bay Foundation (the ONLI Support Team) 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/>.

Eligible Applicants

- ◆ The Trust and OLNI Support Team seek applications from non-profit organizations providing environmental education to local school districts in the Chesapeake Bay watershed.
- ◆ Organizations in Maryland or the Chesapeake Bay watershed portions of D.C., Delaware, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and Virginia.
- ◆ For-profit organizations are not eligible for funding through this program.

Funding Availability, Timeline, and Deadline

Funding Restrictions:

- ◆ Through this RFP, participant organizations can request up to \$10,000 for staff time and travel expenses related to participation in the Course.

Project Timeline: The funding timeline is anticipated to be from September 1, 2024, to June 30, 2025.

Applicants must submit applications in the **Chesapeake Bay Trust Online System by 4:00 PM EST on May 30th, 2024**. 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 and Award Notifications

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 below, then meets to discuss the application merits. The TRC then recommends a suite of applications to the Trust’s Board of Trustees.

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

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. The Trust will mail the first award payment to the requesting organization following: satisfaction of any phase 1 payment award contingencies, including upload of the signed award agreement. Ten percent of the total award will be held until the final report is submitted and approved. In cases where the awardee fails to submit a status report, progress report, final report, or other requirement 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 that may include but are not limited to submission of all receipts for supplies, invoices for subcontractors/contractors, and copies of timesheets for personnel time used (timesheets must include date, name, time worked per day, and coding to tie the time worked to the award).

All financial back-up documentation will be grouped and numbered to correspond to the budget line item reported as spent. Organizations with outstanding final, progress, or status reports will not be awarded additional grants.

The FY24 Outdoor Learning Network Initiative – Network Leadership Course Proposals awards will be announced in June 2024.

Narrative Questions

You will be asked to upload a Word or PDF file addressing the narrative questions located here: <https://cbtrust.org/wp-content/uploads/FY24-OLNI-Network-Leadership-Course-Narrative-Questions.docx>. We recommend that you use the linked document 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.

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.

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.

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. To apply for an award, go to https://www.grantrequest.com/SID_1520?SA=SNA&FID=35727. 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 May 30, 2024**. 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 SAM UEI 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 Executive Officer is the individual that oversees the organization (e.g., Executive Director, Chief Executive Officer, Mayor, President or Vice President, Principal (for schools), etc.) and has the authority to sign/execute award agreements on behalf of the organization. The Executive Officer information is tied directly to all the organization’s applications and should not vary from application to application. If the Executive Officer could be listed as the Project Leader in a future proposal, we

recommend listing a Board Member or other higher-ranking position of the organization as the Executive Officer in order to reduce the variation in the Executive Officer across applications.

- 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.
 - Deliverables Tab
 - Provide estimated metrics for your proposed project such as project participants and outreach and restoration outcomes.
 - Project Partnerships
 - Applicants should upload a letter of commitment from an established school district 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.
 - 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.
 - Terms and Conditions Tab
 - Agree to the specified terms and conditions for the program for which you are applying.

Evaluation Criteria

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

1. Consistency with the RFP (Scale of 1-10 points):
 1. Is the proposal consistent with the intent of the RFP (10 points)?

2. Need (Scale of 1-25 points):
 1. Does the applicant clearly describe the needs and priorities of their organization related to establishing partnerships with local school districts to advance environmental literacy?
 2. Is the audience being engaged in the project identified as historically under-engaged or under-served through indicators such as, but not limited to, communities that were at any point historically redlined or graded as “hazardous” by the Home Owners’ loan corporation, socioeconomic status (communities in which median household income is equal to or less than 75% of state-wide median household income or have high poverty and unemployment rates (<https://www.census.gov>)), communities in which the local school(s) have a “below average” equity score (<http://www.greatschools.org>) or disparities in access to environmental education opportunities, access to green space is limited, or other relevant characteristics as identified in the [EPA Environmental Justice Screening and Mapping Tool](#).

3. Likelihood of Success (Scale of 1-25):
 1. Do the staff who are identified to participate in the Course have decision-making and programming oversight?
 2. Does the applicant demonstrate commitment to learning and applying the Course approach to enhance their environmental literacy program(s)?

4. Sustainability (Scale of 1-15 points):
 1. Does the applicant demonstrate consideration of long-term sustainability strategies (such as engagement of school system leadership to enhance future support and funding)?

5. Budget (Scale of 1-10 points):
 1. Is the budget appropriate and cost effective?

6. Partner Support (Scale of 1-15 points):
 1. Does the applicant have the appropriate partners in place, including a leadership-level school district partner? Is the school district partnership well established? Did the partner(s) provide letters of commitment?

Appendix A: OLNI Support Team

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 250 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's award-winning environmental education program has been one of the cornerstones of their effort to reverse the Bay watershed's decline for the last 50 years. CBF educates tens of thousands of students, teachers, and school administrators each year through immersive field experiences and professional development courses that foster a lifelong connection to the watershed and its stewardship. CBF reaches rural, urban, and suburban communities across the watershed, and 25 percent of the schools they work with are under-resourced. CBF was integral in the development and facilitation of the pilot year of the Network Leadership Course.