



Community Engagement and Restoration Mini Grant Mentorship Program

FY26 Mentorship Program Description



Chesapeake Bay Trust | 108 Severn Avenue, Annapolis, MD 21403
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Introduction and Program Goals

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 \$190 million in grants to municipalities, nonprofit organizations, schools, and public agencies throughout the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

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.

This mentorship program supports the introduction of the grant lifecycle to applicants who may not be experienced in applying for grants. The Trust strives to create a working relationship between organizations who are experienced in grant-writing and project management and those that are new to the Trust's grant programs. It is the Trust's hope that organizations that have experience with successful applications (four or more), will provide a mentorship role for less experienced organizations.

The Trust has a mission to empower all people to participate in the restoration and protection of our region's natural resources through its award-making. As a result, the Trust strongly encourages applications directly from or that engage communities underrepresented in the environmental space. For more about the Trust's commitment to engage underrepresented groups, see our strategic plan at www.cbtrust.org/strategic-plan and <https://cbtrust.org/diversity-inclusion/>.

At A Glance

Program Summary:

The Community Engagement and Restoration Mini Grant Mentorship Program is designed to provide support for new applicants during project development and application submission.

Incentives to serve as a Mentor:

- Engage new audiences
- Empower under-engaged organizations
- Have the ability to apply for a mini grant (up to \$5,000)
- Broaden your network of volunteers and partnerships

Eligible Mentors:

Organizations who have received four or more grants from any of the Trust's programs.

Timeline:

The Community Engagement and Restoration Mini Grant Program typically opens July of each fiscal year and operates on a rolling deadline, until funds are exhausted for the fiscal year. Mentor and Mentee grant applications will be accepted on a rolling basis while the Mini Grant Program is open.

Participation:

Email Sadie Friesen if you would like to participate in the Mentorship Program as a Mentor. Potential Mentors will be advertised on the Trust's website to organizations who are seeking assistance.

Contact:

Sadie Friesen, Program Assistant
410-974-2941 ext. 150
sfriesen@cbtrust.org

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Guidelines to the Mentorship Program

1. Experienced grantees (grantees who have received four or more grants from any of the Trust's programs) may submit an email indicating areas of expertise and skills they can offer potential Mentees.
2. The Trust will make available a list of potential Mentor organizations to applicants seeking assistance in applying for a Trust Community Engagement and Restoration Mini Grant. Mentors are not guaranteed a match with a Mentee.
3. The Mentor organization will be expected to make available **at least 8 hours**, but no more than 20 hours, of time to support a new applicant during project development and application submission.
4. After the Mentee application has been submitted to and approved for funding by the Trust, the Mentor organization will have one year from the date of approval to submit an application for a Community Engagement and Restoration Mini Grant up to \$5,000. During the Trust's 2026 fiscal year (July 1, 2025-June 30, 2026), a Mentor organization **may submit only one mini grant application regardless of how many Mentee organizations the Mentor assists.**
5. Experienced grantees (grantees that have received four or more grants from the Trust) will not be eligible to apply to the Community Engagement and Restoration Mini Grant Program unless they have served as a successful Mentor.
6. Mentor organizations may provide fiscal sponsorship to first-time applicants lacking a bank account in the name of their organization at the time of application. Compensation rates, if any, should be negotiated between the mentor and mentee organization, not to exceed 10% of the direct costs. To better understand the Trust's definition of and policy on Indirect and Direct Costs, visit our Forms and Policies webpage: <https://cbtrust.org/grants/applicant-resources-forms-policies/>. Mentor and mentee pairs will be required to outline and submit a plan for the mentee organizations to directly apply for Trust grant programs (i.e., receive funds and complete projects) in the future. **Organizations interested in fiscal sponsorship must first contact the Trust.**

The Mentor is expected to:	The Mentor is not permitted to:
Assist with project development.	Be the project manager or complete the project for the Mentee.
Review the Mentee's grant proposal during the application process.	Coordinate volunteers for the Mentee's project.
Assist Mentee to submit an application via the Trust's online grant system.	Write the proposal for the Mentee.
Share with Mentees any lessons learned from past projects.	Complete any reporting on behalf of the Mentee.
Make available at least 8 hours but no more than 20 hours of time to support the Mentee.	Charge the mentee for mentor services.

FAQs

How do I become a mentor?

Email Sadie Friesen at sfriesen@cbtrust.org if your organization meets the requirements outlined in the Guidelines to the Mentorship Program section and would like to participate as a Mentor in the Mentorship Program. Potential Mentors will be advertised on the Trust's website to organizations who are seeking assistance.

To be added to the list of available mentor organizations, include the following information in your email:

- Name of organization
- Location of organization
- Description of organization
- Skills and services you can offer mentees (what kind of technical assistance or expertise can you offer to the mentee organization during the grant application process?)
- Contact Person (name and email required)

What should I look for in a mentor organization?

First-time applicants are encouraged to take advantage of the Mentorship Program as an avenue for network and partnership building, as well as receiving technical assistance in the application stage. The Mentorship List represents a wide variety of organizations and expertise, all of which have been successfully awarded through any of the Trust programs four or more times. Finding the best fit with a mentor organization is important and we encourage you to think about the following questions as you consider mentor organizations to reach out to:

- Is the Mentor organization located geographically close to your organization? This could facilitate in-person site visits and meetings, if needed. If not, are you comfortable with virtual correspondence and site visits?
- Does the Mentor offer technical skills and expertise that align with your project idea?
- Could a partnership with the Mentor organization advance your short- (grant period) and long-term organizational goals?
- Does the Mentor have the capacity to make time available to meet the level of assistance you require? The Mentor is required to make available at least eight hours of mentorship but no more than 20 hours.

When should I accept a mentorship role?

We understand that being a Mentor is a time commitment and a significant undertaking. Our goal is to foster productive relationships between new partners. Your offer to be a mentor will be posted widely for the audience of under-engaged potential applicants; as such, we encourage you to think carefully about accepting the role of a Mentor and make sure the best partnership between your organization and a Mentee organization is obtained. If you are contacted, we encourage you to think about the following questions:

- Does the Mentee have a dedicated staff person?
- How many hours is the Mentee willing to commit to a project?
- Do the Mentee have buy-in from Board and constituents to carry out the project?

- Has the Mentee read the Community Engagement and Restoration Mini Grant Program RFP?
- Does the Mentee have access to a computer and other necessary resources?

When am I eligible to apply for a Community Engagement and Restoration Mini Grant?

Your organization is eligible to apply for a Community Engagement and Restoration Mini Grant (Mini Grant) of your own if and after your Mentee's Mini Grant application is approved by the Trust. You will then have one year to apply for one Mini Grant for your organization. Your Mentee will be asked on its application to identify whether a Mentor was used, describe the Mentor's role, and list the amount of time spent with the Mentor. The Trust will evaluate the Mentee's response to ensure proper mentorship role and will send you an email letting you know that your mentorship duties have been successfully met.