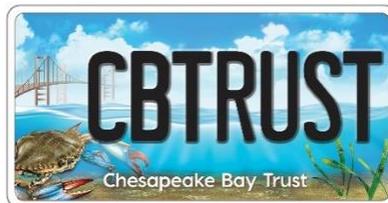




# Mini Environmental Education Grant Program

FY 21 Request for Proposals

---



## Chesapeake Bay Trust

108 Severn Avenue, Annapolis, MD 21403

(410) 974 – 2941 ♦ [www.cbtrust.org](http://www.cbtrust.org)

# Mini Environmental Education Grant Program

## At A Glance

### Program Summary:

The Mini Environmental Education Grant Program is designed to engage citizens and students in Maryland, D.C., Delaware, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and West Virginia in activities that raise public awareness and participation in the restoration and protection of the Chesapeake and coastal Bays and their rivers.

### Deadline:

The Trust will have **two deadlines** for applications in the next fiscal year.

Thursday, July 2, 2020 at 4:00 PM EST

**Thursday January 14, 2021 at 4:00 PM EST**

### Eligible Project Locations:

This program funds throughout the state of Maryland and the Chesapeake Bay watershed portions of D.C., Delaware, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and West Virginia.

### Request Amounts:

Requests up to \$5,000

### Submit Your Application:

Follow the instructions online at [https://www.GrantRequest.com/SID\\_1520?SA=SNA&FID=35005](https://www.GrantRequest.com/SID_1520?SA=SNA&FID=35005)

### Contact:

Emily Stransky, Program Officer, [EStransky@cbtrust.org](mailto:EStransky@cbtrust.org)



## Table of Contents

Introduction .....	3
Program Goals.....	3
Eligible Project Types .....	3
Evaluation Criteria.....	5
Eligible Applicants .....	6
Funding Availability, Restrictions, and Timeline ..	6
Deadlines.....	6
Application Review Process .....	7
Awards and Notifications.....	7
Contact.....	7
Narrative Questions .....	8
Budget Instructions.....	9
Online Application Submission Instructions .....	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 all of our local systems, from the Chesapeake to the Coastal Bays to the Youghiogheny River. The Trust, supported in large part by the Chesapeake Bay License Plate, 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 \$100 million in grants to municipalities, nonprofit organizations, schools, and public agencies throughout Maryland and the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

## Program Goals

---

Through the Mini Environmental Education Grant Program, the Trust seeks to increase student awareness and involvement in the restoration and protection of our region's natural resources through increasing access to programs that provide Meaningful Watershed Educational Experiences (MWEEs).

The program was established to provide accessible funds to schools, organizations, and agencies for Pre-K to 12<sup>th</sup> grade environmental education and specifically seeks to:

- 1) Educate students about natural resources and their local watersheds and how students can become environmental stewards and make a difference in watershed health;
- 2) Engage school communities in education and restoration activities that benefit watershed health;
- 3) Provide MWEEs for students and teachers
- 4) Provide environmental education professional development opportunities for teachers; and
- 5) Support environmental literacy goals within schools, school systems, and other educational institutions.

\*\* Applicants interested in small requests (<\$5,000) to support community engagement and stewardship projects targeting adult communities should refer to the Community Engagement Mini Grant Program available at <https://cbtrust.org/grants/community-engagement/>

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, please see our 2020-2025 Strategic Plan at [www.cbtrust.org/strategic-plan](http://www.cbtrust.org/strategic-plan) and <https://cbtrust.org/diversity-inclusion/>.

## Eligible Project Types

---

The Trust funds three types of projects in this program: MWEEs, outdoor classroom and/or school-yard habitat improvement, and professional development for educators.

### **Project Type 1: MWEEs for Students:**

A good MWEE is not just an outdoor field trip. MWEEs are multi-faceted, learner-centered experiences that focus on investigations into local environmental issues that lead to informed action and civic engagement. Applicants are encouraged to review sources for best practices for meaningful outdoor experiences; specifically the "[Educator's Guide to the Meaningful Watershed Educational Experience \(MWEE\)](#)" and [Bay Backpack's MWEE resources](#) have tools and examples for building a successful MWEE. The applicant can find additional details about the MWEE frame-work in Appendix A. *MWEE program proposals may request a range*

*of approaches to adapt to Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) restrictions and the uncertainty impacting schools throughout the Chesapeake Bay watershed. Funding will support programs for students, including any mix of virtual, at-home, or in-person learning. Proposals that meet the elements below will be prioritized:*

- Programs that include the four Essential Elements and four Supporting Practices of the MWEE will be prioritized.
- Programs that integrate climate change education will be prioritized. The Trust strives to invest in projects and programs that will positively “move the needle” for the health of the environment and communities across Maryland which includes mitigating climate change. Today’s students are tomorrow’s decision-makers and promoting climate literacy is essential to ensuring that future policy decisions address climate change mitigation and adaptation needs. Students should not only learn about the impacts of climate change, but also the solutions necessary to ensure a sustainable and livable world for all. Note: climate change does not have to be the focus of the education effort but could instead be weaved throughout the learning experience.

### **Project Type 2: Outdoor Classroom and/or School-yard Habitat Improvement Requests**

Proposals submitted requesting support for outdoor classrooms or school-yard habitat improvement (such as a one-time tree planting or pollinator garden planting) should focus on developing outdoor learning spaces on school grounds. Evidence suggests that the risk of contracting COVID-19 and other infectious diseases is significantly lower in outdoor settings when appropriate social distancing measures are taken. There is also a growing body of research that demonstrates the benefits of outdoor learning for mental health, stress reduction, physical health, student engagement, and academic success. Applicants must demonstrate how the projects, during design and construction, as well as in the years after completion, will support high quality instruction for students. Proposals that include the elements below will be prioritized:

- ◆ Demonstration that students will be involved, through the MWEE framework, in the planning and implementation of the outdoor classroom or habitat.
- ◆ Integration of the outdoor classroom in future MWEE programs
- ◆ Indication that the classroom or habitat will be used for certification or re-certification of Green School/Sustainable School status
- ◆ Supporting attachments including: a draft design plan, photos of the site, native plant list if applicable, letter of commitment from school facilities department, and maintenance plan.

While some contractor fees for implementation may be necessary, projects requesting contractor involvement in lieu of any student involvement will NOT be prioritized.

### **Project Type 3: Professional Development for School Staff:**

Applicants may request funds for professional development (PD) experiences for teachers, administrators, and other school staff to build the understanding of environmental content and competence in inquiry based and investigative instructional techniques. *Professional Development proposals may request a range of approaches to adapt to Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) restrictions and the uncertainty impacting schools throughout the Chesapeake Bay watershed. Funding will support professional development for teachers, providers, or administrators that can include any mix of virtual, at-home, or in-person learning.*

- ◆ Trainings and workshops must support elements of the MWEE model, such as the investigation of a local environmental issue, using the outdoors as a context for learning, and/or design and implementation of an action project.
- ◆ The Trust encourages trainings to be at least 30 hours and including not only workshops but also ongoing support to ensure that participants are successful in using the information gained from the trainings.

- ◆ PD trainings should model the Environmental Education pedagogy as much as possible, including the use of the field/communities for instruction
- ◆ PD trainings should include strategies to increase the environmental literacy of the participating teachers encouraging them to be environmental role models for their students.
- ◆ Successful applications should provide a draft list of teachers by subject and grade that are targeted to attend the trainings with an explanation of why the teachers were selected.
- ◆ Successful applications should provide a draft agenda. The absence of a draft agenda will need to be justified.
  - Agenda must require participants to complete the [MWEE 101 Online Course](#) ahead of PD training and/or include an overview of the MWEE model to ensure participants are able to use what is learned to design, enhance and/or implement their own MWEE.

## Evaluation Criteria

---

**MWEE Criteria** – The following criteria will be used to evaluate MWEE projects.

- ◆ Completeness of the MWEE (1-20): Are the essential elements of a MWEE present and robust?
- ◆ Supporting Practices (1-20): Are the supporting practices of a MWEE present?
- ◆ Age-Appropriateness (1-10): The MWEE should grow in complexity and sophistication across grades, starting with educator guided investigation and leading to student-led inquiry
- ◆ Climate Change (1-10): Does the proposed program integrate climate change education?

**Outdoor Classroom and School-yard Habitat Criteria** – The following criteria will be used to evaluate Outdoor Classroom projects.

- ◆ Connection to instruction (1-15): Are students involved in the planning and design of the outdoor classroom or habitat using the MWEE model?
- ◆ Future MWEE instruction (1-15): Has the applicant demonstrated that the outdoor classroom or habitat will be used in future years for MWEE instruction?
- ◆ Green School certification (1-5): If applicable, will the project assist the school in Green School/Sustainable School (or equivalent) re-certification or certification?
- ◆ Technical Soundness (1-25): Projects must be carefully planned, technically sound, and involve the assistance of experts, agencies, or organizations as necessary. The applicant must provide information about all technical assistance received and project partners involved in the design and implementation of the projects.

**Professional Development Criteria** – The following criteria will be used to evaluate Professional Development requests.

- ◆ Soundness of Plan (1-40): Does the length of training ensure teacher success? Will teachers be supported before, during, and after the training? Is the draft agenda appropriate?
- ◆ Support of the MWEE (1-10): Does the work support elements of the MWEE model as a context for learning, and/or design and implementation of an action project?
- ◆ Increase in Environmental Literacy (1-10): Will the environmental literacy of the participating teachers be increase, encouraging them to be environmental role models for their students?

**General Criteria for All Requests** – In addition to the above project-specific criteria, the following criteria will also be considered, with preference given to projects meeting multiple criteria.

- ◆ Supporting Documents (1-8): Does the applicant include all required supporting documents? (e.g., native plant list, site plan, photos of site, maintenance plan, letters of commitment, agenda etc.)
- ◆ Demonstration of [MWEE 101 Online Course](#) Completion (0-2): Has the applicant submitted a certificate demonstrating completion of the MWEE 101 Online Course and thus experience in designing and implementing a MWEE?

- ◆ Budget and Match (1-10): Is the budget reasonable? Match is encouraged, but not required. Is match included?
- ◆ Feasibility (1-10): Can the project be accomplished? Where relevant, are project partners provided?
- ◆ Timing (1-10): Projects should be completed within one year after receipt of the award.
  - For MWEE projects, the same group of students should be involved in the entire MWEE experience; therefore, projects should not take place over multiple years unless the same students will be involved through the entire project.

## Eligible Applicants

---

The Trust welcome requests from the following organizations:

- ◆ 501(c)3 Organizations
- ◆ Faith Based Organizations
- ◆ Community Associations
- ◆ Service, Youth, and Civic Groups
- ◆ Municipal, County, Regional, State, Federal Public Agencies
- ◆ Soil/Water Conservation Districts and/or Resource Conservation and Development Councils
- ◆ Forestry Boards
- ◆ Public or Independent Higher Education Institutions
  - For Profit organizations are NOT eligible for funding through this program.

The Trust prefers that the school serve as the lead applicant instead of a partner, however, if a partner does apply, the Trust requires the following:

- ◆ The participating school(s) name(s)
- ◆ A narrative statement explaining why the partner is applying rather than a school
- ◆ Letter(s) of commitment from participating school(s)
  - If the applicant is representing an after-school and/or summer school program, it is imperative to meet all essential elements of a MWEE described above.

## Funding Availability, Restrictions, and Timeline

---

### Funding Availability:

- ◆ Applicants may request up to \$5,000
- ◆ Match is encouraged, but not required.

**Funding Restrictions:** The Trust does NOT fund projects outside of Maryland or the Chesapeake Bay watershed portions of D.C., Delaware, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and Virginia.

**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.

## Deadlines

---

Applicants must submit applications in the **Chesapeake Bay Trust Online System** by **4:00 PM EST on June 11, 2020 or January 14, 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 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.

Examples of application and project timing:

- ◆ If your field trip occurs on September 14, 2020 you must apply by June 11, 2020;
- ◆ If your field trip occurs on March 1, 2021 you must apply by June 11, 2020, eight months in advance, in order to receive notification before your trip.
- ◆ If your field trip occurs on April 5, 2021, you can apply to either of these deadlines. However, if you wait until the January 14, 2021 deadline, you will not find out until March 12, 2021, only about four weeks before your field trip. If you need more lead time for planning purposes, you should apply by the June 11, 2020 deadline.

## Application Review Process

---

All submitted applications are scored by technical experts in the field supported by this RFP and discussed by a review committee. Reviewers score all applications based on the evaluation criteria listed in the “Evaluation Criteria” section above.

The Trust reserves the right to fund projects and budget items that advance its mission and meet its 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 4 rounds in this grant program is 73%, this includes both fully and partially funded applications.

## 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. The Trust will mail the first award payment to the requesting organization following: 1) the Trust’s receipt of the signed award agreement and 2) satisfaction of any phase 1 payment award contingencies. In cases where the awardee fails to submit a status report, progress report, or 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 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).

Organizations with outstanding final, progress, or status reports will not be awarded additional grants.

<b>Deadline Date</b>	<b>Decision Date</b>	<b>Project Start Date</b>
June 11, 2020 by 4:00 PM EST	August 7, 2020	No earlier than August 8, 2020
January 14, 2021 by 4:00 PM EST	March 12, 2021	No earlier than March 13, 2021

## Contact

---

For technical assistance contact Emily Stransky at (410) 974-2941 x 101 or [EStransky@cbtrust.org](mailto: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 as described in the Eligible Project Types 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 (above) will be met.

1. **Project Track:** Indicate to which track you are applying (MWEE, Outdoor Classroom/School-yard Improvement, or Professional Development).
2. **Project purpose:** Please provide a brief (up to 5 sentences) summary of the project. Include the following:
  - a. Goals (overall aim the program or project will help achieve, which may extend beyond the term of the grant);
  - b. Objectives (specific, measurable steps within the grant period that will help realize the goal), and
  - c. Grade level(s) and participating school(s) or school district(s).
3. **Project Description:**
  - a. For **MWEE Projects**, answer the following questions:
    - i. What is the driving question that will determine the students’ issue investigation?
    - ii. Provide a brief list of the outdoor experiences that will occur. If COVID restrictions prevent off-site field experiences, how will the school grounds or students’ own homes be used for issue investigation?
    - iii. Please describe the action project or if student-directed, potential action projects. \*Please note, action projects should implement solutions to the issue identified through the MWEE project and should go beyond sharing information.
    - iv. Describe how students will reflect on what they have learned throughout the MWEE and how the students will share their knowledge with peers and parents.
  - b. For **Outdoor Classroom and/or School-yard Habitat Improvement Projects**, answer the following questions:
    - i. How will students be involved in the planning and implementation of the project?
    - ii. How will the project be used for future MWEE investigations?
    - iii. Will the project be used for Green School/Sustainable School certification or re-certification? If yes, please list the applicable program. (See [Bay Backpack](#) for more information on programs in your state).
    - iv. Include all required supporting attachments, as listed in the “Project Types” sections of this RFP.
  - c. For **Professional Development Projects**, answer the following questions:
    - i. Trainings and workshops should support elements of the Meaningful Watershed Educational Experience (MWEE) model, such as the investigation of a local environmental issue, using the outdoors as a context for learning, and/or design and implementation of an action project. Describe which elements of the MWEE model will be integrated into the training.
    - ii. How will participants be recruited?
    - iii. Describe:
      1. The ongoing support teachers will receive following the training,
      2. how implementation of the new content and tools will be evaluated, and

3. what resources teachers will have access to, to be successful.
  - iv. Include a Draft Agenda (if not available then please justify why). A component of all professional development trainings should be a requirement for participants to complete the MWEE 101 Online Course ahead of the PD trainings and/or an overview of the MWEE model to ensure participants are able to use what is learned to design, enhance, and/or implement their own MWEE.
4. **Demographic Information:** In light of the Trust's commitment to the advancement of diversity in its award-making, please provide demographic information about the community or population involved in or served by the project. Please 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, please 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. **Sustainability:** The Trust aims to invest in projects that have the longest potential longevity, after the grant period has ended. 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 to maintain its value, please provide an abbreviated plan describing how the project will be sustained beyond the term of the proposed funding request?
  6. **Consultants:** If requesting funding for *contractual costs* over \$3,000, for non-Maryland applicants (who will likely be receiving federal funds if awarded), applicants should either (a) have already obtained cost estimates, quotes, or bids from at least three service providers prior to completing the application, or (b) indicate in the proposal that at least three estimates, quotes, or bids will be obtained. If neither route is indicated, the proposal will be deemed ineligible.
    - ◆ Has/will a consultant be hired and has a contractor been selected?
    - ◆ Describe your consultant/contractor selection process, including justification and background of the selected consultant/contractor. If using a bid process, describe the process.

## 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.
- ◆ 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.

## 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/consultant 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. To apply for an award, go to the Trust website here: <https://cbtrust.org/grants/environmental-education-mini/>, 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, please 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 the date of the deadline** 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, consultants, 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; project start and end dates; the watershed, county, and legislative district in which the project is located; and the latitude and longitude coordinates of the project location.
- Timeline Tab
  - 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.
- 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: [www.cbtrust.org/forms](http://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.
  
- 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.

## Appendix A – MWEE Framework

---

There are four steps (essential elements) and four important components (supporting practices) that educators must incorporate to ensure success and when combined, create a robust MWEE. Any costs associated with the four essential elements can be requested through the Mini Environmental Education Grant Program.

### Essential Elements

- 1) **Issue Definition** – articulation of a specific natural resource problem on which the students’ focus serves as the “driving question”:
  - ◆ Students choose or are focused on a locally relevant environmental problem, issue, or phenomenon requiring background research and investigation.
  - ◆ The *driving question* is the “big-picture” question that establishes the purpose of the learning and should create interest, encompasses both natural and social system topics (environmental and civic engagement), allows for activities across multiple disciplines and allows for student investigation of a locally relevant environmental problem.
  - ◆ *Supporting questions* are generated by the students and should uncover students’ current knowledge about the issue, create curiosity and direct the students to a specific investigative question that addresses the driving question.
  - ◆ Students can be taught about the issues in a variety of ways depending on the issue or grade level: through classroom instruction, the collection of data, conducting experiments, talking to experts, and/or reviewing credible publications.
  - ◆ Students reflect on their personal experiences and values related to the issue.
    - Please Note: The Trust highly encourages as much student choice, as age appropriate, in the selection of the driving question and thus issue investigation (younger typically needs more guidance than older)
- 2) **Outdoor Field Experience** – students participate in one or more outdoor experience sufficient to investigate the issue:

- ◆ Students begin exploring the chosen issue and answering the driving and supporting questions in a variety of ways: through observations; data collection; field trips led by an environmental education field trip provider; or outdoor experiences led by the teacher or environmental professional.
  - ◆ Regardless of the means, students are making and recording observations to help them answer their supporting and organizing questions. As data collection progresses the students will begin to hypothesize the answers to their questions.
  - ◆ Inside study (e.g. classroom, computer, or library research) can be supported to build background knowledge and gain a deeper understanding of the issue.
- 3) **Stewardship & Civic Action Project** – students identify, explore and implement solutions to address the issue:
- ◆ Investigations lead to student designed solutions to solve an environmental problem identified in the investigations.
  - ◆ Students design solutions and conduct a project of their own an/or participate in teacher designed projects (when age appropriate).
  - ◆ Create a list of all potential action projects and discuss how each option will impact the issue; consider projects that might serve as solutions in the community or on the school campus.
  - ◆ An action project is selected based on an understanding of the potential impact to address the issue. Action projects can seek to have natural resource/restoration or community engagement benefits.
  - ◆ Action projects are (in part or whole) designed to take place in the local environment (outdoors).
  - ◆ The Trust encourages students to extend their learning to civic action like the ones listed below. This allows students to continue to solve real-world issues and is an excellent opportunity to involve civics, social studies and/or government in the project.
  - ◆ Action projects can create change and serve as a solution at three different levels: a systems level, a community level, or an individual level.

**Action Project Examples:**

- ◆ *Systems Level* – seek to affect power structures, organizations, and the environment in which decisions are made:
  - Civic Action (e.g., town meetings, writing elected officials/decision makers)
  - Educating organizations about relevant local policies
- ◆ *Community Level* – seek to affect community attitudes, norms, awareness, or practices; and often target entire communities or large groups within the community:
  - Community Engagement (e.g., presentations, social media, event-organizing, mentoring, PSAs, flyers, posters)
- ◆ *Individual Level* – seek to implement discrete projects that influence knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, and practices of individuals:
  - Watershed Restoration or Protection (e.g., create schoolyard habitat, planting native plants, invasive species removal, community cleanup, stormwater management)
  - Everyday Choices (e.g., reduce/reuse/recycle, composting, energy/water conservation)

Habitat and Restoration project requests **must** include:

- A native plant list;
- A site plan/project design;
- A photo of the site;

- A detailed maintenance plan indicating commitment to the project's long-term success.
    - For projects on school property: The grounds department and the Principal must sign the maintenance plan
    - For projects planned on properties other than that of the applicant: A letter stating that permission has been granted by the entity owning the land is required.
- 4) **Synthesis and Conclusions** – students access their understanding of the issue and have the opportunity to re-focus and reflect after a project is completed:
- Students share data and communicate results to fellow students, teachers, parents, local professionals, and politicians.
  - Educators evaluate student progress both in knowledge and skills.

### Supporting Practices

- 1) **Classroom Integration** – MWEEs should be fully integrated into what is occurring concurrently in the classroom and should occur where and when fit into the instructional sequence. MWEEs can be rich, multi-disciplinary units that have a unique opportunity to make strong connections among subject areas and reflect an integrated approach to learning.
- 2) **Active Teacher Support** – MWEEs should be connected to what is occurring in the formal classroom, therefore, classroom teachers should lead or actively support all phases. MWEEs can be enhanced and supported by partners, such as environmental educators, and natural resource professionals, but teachers have the sustained contact with students throughout the school year that positions them to better support and evaluate student learning.
- 3) **Local Context** – The local community should be viewed as a primary resource for MWEEs. Place-based education promotes learning that is rooted in the unique history, environment, culture, economy, and art of a students' schoolyard, neighborhood or community, and thus offering the opportunity to explore how individual and collective decisions impact one's immediate surroundings. Examples of local places include: a stream near a school, a school building and its grounds, local parks or undeveloped areas, and even developed areas like parking lots, fields or marinas.
- 4) **Sustained Activity** – MWEEs should be a sustained activity that stimulated and motivates the student from beginning to end. Though a field experience may occur one day, the total duration leading up to and following the experience should involve rich learning experience such as monitoring, research and action projects that may spread over weeks or months. Experiences such as tours, gallery visits, simulations. Demonstrations, or nature walks may be instructionally useful, but alone do not constitute a MWEE.