Veterans Engagement

FY24 Request for Proposals

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 $160 million in grants to municipalities, nonprofit organizations, schools, and public agencies throughout the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

This grant program is designed to support veterans' groups and organizations engaging veterans as they provide healing and therapeutic services, outdoor recreation, community engagement, and green jobs training. Funding for this program is supported in part by the Healing Hunting and Fishing Fund through the online boating, fishing, and hunting license and registration site at the Maryland Department of Natural Resources.

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/.

The Trust recognizes that application processes can be complicated and time-consuming; the Trust continues to work to simplify our application processes where possible. New applicants, new organizations, small organizations, or any group that is experiencing capacity challenges or other barriers to applying, is eligible to receive guidance on the application process. Please contact the Program Manager, Jaren Baluyot at jbaluyot@cbtrust.org.

Applicants are strongly encouraged to contact Trust staff to discuss applications *at least* two weeks prior to planned application submission.

At A Glance

Program Summary:

This grant program is designed to support veterans' groups and organizations engaging veterans as they provide healing and therapeutic services, outdoor recreation, community engagement, and green jobs training.

Deadline:

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

Eligible Project Locations: Maryland

Request Amounts: Up to $5,000

Submit Your Application:

Follow the instructions online at https://cbtrust.org/grants/veterans-engagement/

Contact:

Jaren Baluyot, Program Assistant, 410-974-2941 ext. 103, jbaluyot@cbtrust.org

This Request for Proposals was updated on 2/16/24.

Eligible Applicants

The Healing Hunting and Fishing Fund and the Trust welcome requests from the following organizations:

Veterans' groups and organizations serving veterans groups. Applications are particularly encouraged from organizations who have never received a grant from the Trust. Organizations can be 501(c)3, private nonprofits, faith-based organizations, community associations, service and civic groups; and/or Municipal, county, regional, state, federal public agencies.

Eligible Project Locations and Funding Availability

Eligible Project Locations: Maryland

Funding Availability: The funding partners and the Trust anticipate funds available in FY24 of up to $37,000.

Project Timeline

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

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/veterans-engagement/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.

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.

Deadline

Proposals for the Veterans Engagement Mini Grant Program are accepted on an on-going basis until funds are fully expended for the given fiscal year; check our website and sign up for our grantee newsletter for the most up to date information about the status of this rolling program. The Trust must receive all proposals at least EIGHT weeks prior to the start of the proposed project. The Trust cannot make exceptions to this policy.

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.
- 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.

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

Deliverables Tab: Provide estimated metrics for your proposed project such as project participants and outreach and restoration outcomes.

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.

Narrative & Supporting Documents Tab: Use the links below to download the ***required*** narrative questions template for the track you are applying to. Complete all questions and upload the completed document as a Microsoft Word or PDF file.

https://cbtrust.org/wp-content/uploads/FY24-Veterans-Engagement-Mini-Grant-Program-Narrative-Questions.pdf

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

Definitions

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 Program Leader is the individual 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.

Budget Tab:

1. **Financial Management Spreadsheet – Application Budget Upload**
    a. 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 watch a video with instructions on how to complete the FMS.
2. **Financial Management Spreadsheet – Application Budget Information**
    a. 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.
3. **Additional Budget Justification**
    a. 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.

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

Demographics Tab (optional): Provide voluntary demographic information. Provide information about your organization's current diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice (DEIJ) efforts and future goals.

Evaluation Criteria

The following criteria will be used by technical expert reviewers to evaluate your proposal:

Most Important Criteria:

- **Consistency with Requests for Proposal (RFP)**: Is the project proposed consistent with the intent and goals of the grant program? Are all required application components included for sound evaluation of the application?
- **Cost Effectiveness/Budget**: Is the budget appropriate (at or below $5,000 requested) and cost effective? Are the budget line items justified in the project narrative? Are project partners being resourced appropriately? In-kind and cash match is not required but can be included, if necessary, to accomplish project goals.
- **Likelihood of Project Success**: What is the likelihood of both short- and long-term success if this project were to move forward? Are methodologies sound and consistent with best practices?

Important Criteria:

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

providing facility), is a transfer of “ownership” to the community built into the project and the ability o f the community to carry the work forward developed?

<u>Additional Criteria to be Considered:</u>

- **General Quality of Application**: What is the level of completeness and attention to detail?
- **Supporting Documents**: Does the application include appropriate attachments? For on-the-ground projects, are a site plan, site photos, a native plant list, and a maintenance plan included? For outreach projects, are a list of knowledge objectives, evaluation plan, and workshop agenda (if applicable) included?

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 funding partners reserve the right to fund projects and budget items 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. 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. 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.

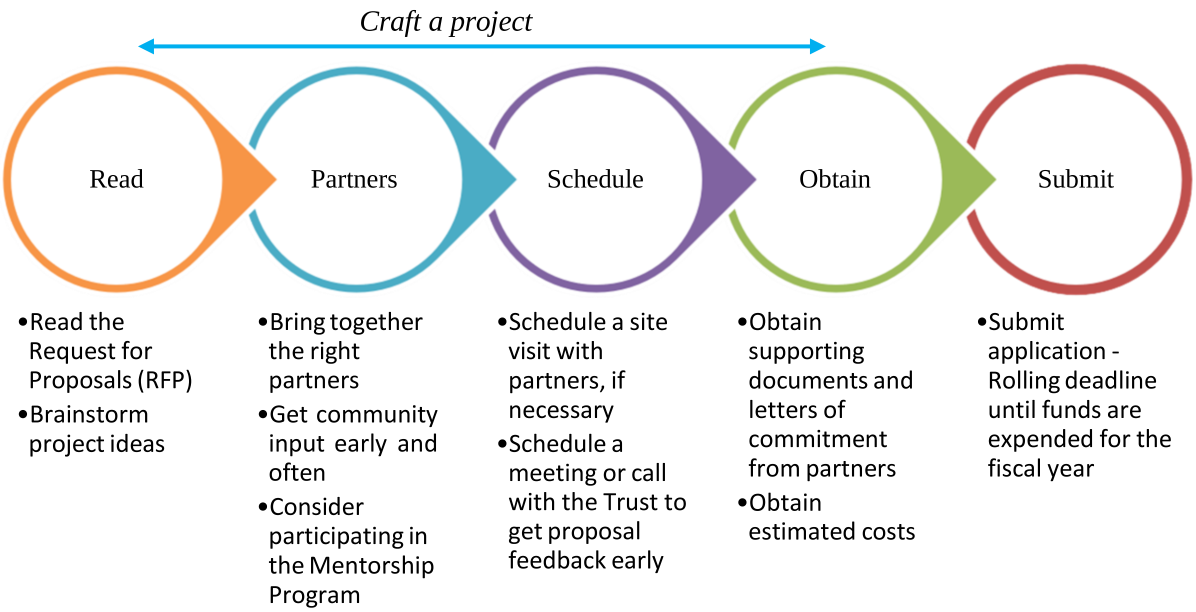
When the project is complete, awardees are required to complete final reports that may include but are not limited to submission of all receipts for supplies, invoices for subcontractors/contractors, and copies of timesheets for personnel time used (timesheets must include date, name, time worked per 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. <u>Organizations with outstanding final, progress, or status reports will not be awarded additional grants</u>.

Appendix A: Guidance for New Applicants

This guidance outlines the steps needed to develop project ideas and grant applications for those who are new to community engagement and/or restoration projects. Many steps are involved in developing a project. Some involve engaging partners or obtaining expert technical advice. For example, experts can help the applicant to select a proposed project location, project type, and estimated costs to enable an applicant to develop an appropriate budget request.

The following steps are a general framework for project development; please note that applicants are welcome to contact the Trust during any of these steps.



Step 1: Read

a. The first step is to thoroughly read through the Request for Proposals (RFP). If you have any questions after reading through the RFP, contact the program lead listed on the program website.
b. Brainstorm on general project ideas. Observe the environmental issues in your community and develop project proposals designed to target those issues.
c. Use the Eligible Project Types list as a guide to measure how well your project type fits with the program goals. Creative project types are encouraged, after discussion with the program lead.

Step 2: Partners

a. The most successful projects seek community input early and often (often after each of the steps below), and work with the landowner at the first step.
    i. Community input provides the history of the site and the buy-in needed for a successful project. Build this community input into your project idea.
        a. Community meetings are a venue at which to exchange information and discuss the proposed project with the project stakeholders.
b. Partnering with technical experts can strengthen your proposal and boost the success of your project. Contact local environmental groups that can assist in carrying out your project idea.

c. For assistance at the project development stage, participate in the Mentorship Program – your group will be matched up with an experienced Mentor with an array of technical skills.

Step 3: Schedule

a. For restoration projects, schedule a site visit with individuals or partners who have technical expertise. The Trust program lead can assist in locating appropriate technical partners.
   i. In person site assessments are best but could be done remotely.
   ii. Join the site visit(s) with as many team members as possible.
b. For outreach projects, schedule a meeting with a community engagement expert (preferably a member of the target community) to help develop outreach and evaluation plans.
c. Schedule community meetings to obtain community input, as frequently as necessary in order to maximize buy-in and future project success.
d. New applicants are especially encouraged to contact the program lead prior to applying, to discuss project ideas and get feedback on proposals.

Step 4: Obtain

a. Determine the work necessary in order to complete the project and determine the associated costs for this work including timelines. Be as specific and detailed as possible; look up costs or get quotes if needed.
   i. The Trust strongly recommends that applicants get at least three cost estimates or quotes from three service providers.
   ii. Conduct a site visit with potential contractors. Based on the site visit, request the firm's scope of work and estimated costs
b. Obtain Letters of Commitment from project partners. Letters of Commitment should detail the specific role the partner will play in your project. To better understand the Trust's definition of letter of commitment, see the Letter of Commitment Guidance and Policy (source: this link is found under the "Other Important Documents and Forms" section on our Forms and Policies webpage: https://cbtrust.org/forms-policies/).

Step 5: Submit

a. Before submitting your application, review your entire application and supporting documentation once more to ensure you have all the necessary components.
   i. Read through your narrative responses. Are all questions fully addressed and answered in detail? Avoid one sentence responses.
   ii. Review your supporting documentation. Are all required supporting documents included in your application package? Are all Letters of Commitment uploaded?
   iii. Review your application budget. Are all line items justified in the narrative and budget justification section of the application?
b. Once you have ensured all necessary components have been included in your application package, make sure everything is uploaded to your online application and that all required information is entered in the online system.
c. Submit! You will know your submission was successful when you receive an automated email confirmation.

For additional information and grant writing tips, contact the program lead, Jaren Baluyot at jbaluyot@cbtrust.org or (410) 974-2941 x 103, or visit the Trust's website at: https://cbtrust.org/additional-resources/.

Appendix B: Guidelines for Project Types

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

Greening/Garden Projects

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

Publication, Printing, and Electronic Media Projects

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

resources are supporting).

- Applicants proposing print media are strongly encouraged to make an electronic copy of the publication available on a public website.
- For web-distributed footage, applicants must secure all required digital distribution rights.

Workshops and Trainings

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