
Chesapeake Bay Land and Water Initiative

2017-2018 Grant Program | Request for Letters of Inquiry

OPENS: October 4, 2017

DEADLINE: Tuesday, November 14, 2017 at 5:00pm EST

For more information contact:

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**Chesapeake Bay Land and Water Initiative
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Request for Letters of Inquiry**

The Chesapeake Bay Land and Water Initiative (Initiative) is a partnership between the Chesapeake Bay Funders Network and the Land Trust Alliance to advance private land conservation and stewardship that protects and restores water quality in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed. The Initiative seeks to support projects consistent with this goal through its second round of grantmaking in 2017-2018.

The Initiative's competitive grant program makes strategic, targeted investments in land trusts, watershed groups, and other conservation partners to accelerate permanent land conservation and stewardship on conserved land with a meaningful impact on water quality.

Project Criteria and Examples

The protection and/or restoration of water quality and a strong link with permanently protected private land are primary criteria for this grant program. **All projects must demonstrate a meaningful impact on water quality to be eligible**, and, where possible, provide measurable, verifiable results. They must also ultimately lead to new permanently protected private land (in the case of land conservation projects), or take place on permanently protected private land (in the case of stewardship/restoration projects).

We seek projects that:

- Prioritize, promote, and incentivize private land conservation and stewardship activities that best protect, improve, or enhance water quality and have potential to serve as replicable models in other parts of the watershed;
- support or build collaborative, diverse partnerships among land trusts; watershed groups; purchase of development rights (PDR) programs; local, state, and federal governments; and other partners that collectively help achieve land protection and stewardship goals;
- promote new or emerging projects/ideas that reflect creative problem solving and are positioned to have greater impact with additional resources;
- create or support cross-cutting programs linking elements such as innovative science-based planning, community engagement, creative or new financing programs/policies, and/or ecosystem services; and/or
- provide the best opportunities to leverage CBFN members' and other funders' current investments in initial landscapes, and other financial resources, knowledge, expertise and staff capacity.

Projects must meet at least one, and preferably several, of these criteria to be successful in this process.

We anticipate that community-based outreach and conservation activities that increase understanding of and build public support for land protection and stewardship for their benefit to water quality may be integrated into the above types of projects. However, projects focused on community outreach or communications alone are not a good fit for this program.

Likewise, land acquisition funding is not available through this grantmaking program, although funding for due diligence costs of strategic land protection projects with direct water quality benefits is possible.

The most successful grant requests in our 2017 grant program were able to describe significant benefits for water quality and many included science-based land conservation planning and implementation and/or stewardship/restoration activities as a focus. **Brief descriptions of projects funded in our 2017 grant round are available [here](#).**

Eligibility

Grants will be limited geographically to projects in these initial sub-watersheds:

- Upper Susquehanna watersheds
- Lower Susquehanna watersheds
- Juniata watershed
- Upper Potomac watershed
- Shenandoah watershed
- Rapidan/Rappahannock watershed
- Eastern Shore watersheds

Click [here](#) for a map of our initial sub-watersheds.

This grant program is open to land trusts, watershed associations, advocacy groups, and other non-governmental organizations operating in the above sub-watersheds. Public agencies are not eligible for funding, but partnerships with local, state, and federal partners are strongly encouraged. Successful applicants must have a proven track record and demonstrate the commitment and capacity to achieve near-term success in one or more of the project interests described here. While the Initiative is focused primarily on groups with the ability to accomplish the proposed project without additional capacity, in limited situations, organizational development may be considered to fill capacity gaps in initial landscapes. Ultimately, these projects must deliver results that protect, restore, or enhance water quality.

If you have questions about your organization's capacity to qualify for the grant program, please contact Jennifer Miller Herzog, Chesapeake Program Manager, jmillerherzog@lta.org.

What we learned from our first round of grantmaking

What is innovative for one applicant may be "business as usual" for another. This grant program seeks to fund projects that help each grantee expand its work on water quality—taking a new approach not previously taken or building new partnerships needed to work in a new way. As such, our principle of "innovation" will be assessed on a project-by-project and organization-by-organization basis, as well as for the field of land conservation more broadly. This program also asks applicants to develop a more strategic approach to water quality, recognizing that "not all acres are created equal." Beyond simply working on a riparian property, for example, we will want to know why a particular property or project is the right one, in the right place, for the right reasons.

Projects funded in the previous round, with brief project descriptions, are summarized [here](#). During our previous process, we found that it was helpful to discuss project ideas with prospective applicants prior to the deadline. These discussions helped strengthen project alignment with the grant program's goals and/or helped save applicants' time by discouraging poorly fitting projects that would not have been competitive. We encourage you to give us a call!

Letter of Inquiry: Process and Timeline

This open request for Letters of Inquiry (LOI) from interested applicants is the first stage of the grant process. Applicants whose projects are successful at this stage will be invited to submit full proposals for consideration.

LOI proposals should focus on work to be completed no later than December 2019 and **requests should fall within a range of \$10,000 to \$30,000. These are one-time grants.** Your project should be designed to deliver results with this in mind. Future funding opportunities may develop to accommodate multi-

year projects—including those that build upon or address lessons learned from projects funded in this cycle—but this is not to be expected or assumed.

All LOI's are due **Tuesday, November 14, 2017 at 5:00pm EST**. LOIs (and later, full proposals) are assessed by a team of reviewers. Applicants with successful LOIs will be invited by December 22, 2017 to submit full proposals. Full proposals will be due on February 9, 2018. Announcements of grant awards will be made by late March 2018.

We use an online grants management system, and all LOIs must be submitted online. Please visit our [online grants database](#) to submit your LOI.

In addition to general information about your organization and project, your LOI must provide a project narrative of no more than 1,000 words. Please be sure that you address the following questions in your narrative:

- What is the goal of the project? Broadly speaking, how does it support your organizational mission and the goals of the Land and Water Initiative?
- What outcomes do you hope to achieve? What will change on the ground as a result?
- What activities and outputs will your project undertake?
- Specifically address how your project will make a direct contribution to preserving or improving water quality. Describe how your project is new or innovative—e.g., uses new scientific tools, takes a new approach, builds new partnerships, accelerates previous success, or magnifies impact beyond “business as usual”—whether for your organization or the larger Chesapeake landscape.
- Who are your current and potential partners on this project? Please describe their roles.
- What funds from other sources will be available for this project?

The deadline to submit an LOI is
Tuesday, November 14, 2017 at 5:00pm EST.

All LOIs must be submitted [online](#).

Late LOIs will not be accepted.

You are encouraged to contact Jennifer Miller Herzog, Chesapeake Program Manager, at jmillerherzog@lta.org or 406-580-6410 with questions or to discuss project ideas.

Interested applicants are also invited to a webinar about the Initiative grant program on **Wednesday, October 11, 2017 at 10:30 am**. Webinar registration information is available [here](#) and on the Chesapeake Land and Water Initiative [webpage](#). If you are not able to attend the webinar, it will be recorded and available to view shortly after the live session.

About the Chesapeake Bay Land and Water Initiative

The Initiative is based upon the findings and recommendations of the 2015 [Chesapeake Bay Watershed Land Trust Assessment: Accelerating Land Conservation to Protect and Improve Water Quality](#). The Assessment made clear that healthy water is a key conservation driver for many land trusts and a much-valued resource in the communities where they work. It also found that they could do much more if greater resources were available to build their knowledge, skills, capacity, and partnerships to work more intentionally and effectively to achieve water quality improvements.

The Land and Water Initiative supports two program areas:

- 1) A **competitive grant program**, open to diverse conservation partners (see eligibility section above), to advance the recommendations of the *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Land Trust Assessment* to accelerate a combination of land protection and stewardship that will best impact water quality protection and improvement.
- 2) A major investment in **public policy, communications, and other integrated activities** at the federal, state, regional, and local level that significantly expands awareness of the importance of land protection in meeting Chesapeake Bay Program goals, improves related policies for land conservation, and increases the engagement of the land conservation community in these efforts—working in close coordination with state land trust associations, watershed groups, and other partners.

Please visit the Initiative's [webpage](#) for more details.