

Building Competitive Projects and Proposals

A National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Grants Writing Workshop for Pennsylvania Conservation Districts – *Chesapeake Bay Watershed focus*

February 1, 2022



Ahead of Today's Discussion

Technical Issues?

- Message PACD's Zoom Hosts in Chat Box
- Holly Miller or Molly Burns

Session will be recorded

 Slides will also be made available after today's workshop

Questions on Content?

- Clarifying question? use Chat Box if needed
- Content question? Q&A after presentations

PollEV

- See Poll device link in Chat Box
- PollEv.com/cleanwater378
 - or text "cleanwater378" to 22333

POLL 1



NFWF Chesapeake Bay Stewardship Fund Team

National Fish & Wildlife Foundation (NFWF):

Jake Reilly, Director Stephanie Heidbreder, Manager Nicole Thompson, Coordinator

NFWF Field Liaisons:

Liz Feinberg, Calvan Environmental David Hirschman, Hirschman Water & Environment, LLC Kristen Hughes Evans, Sustainable Chesapeake Katie Ombalski, Woods and Waters LLC Kristen Saacke Blunk, Headwaters LLC



What you'll get from today's workshop



Update on current NFWF funding programs in PA with a focus on Chesapeake Bay Watershed



Insights and practice thinking through project needs and alignment with NFWF funding programs



Agenda

Guidance and tips for preparing a competitive NFWF project proposal

1 NFWF Funding Programs

2 Project Planning and Picking the Right Grant Program

5 min break

- 3 Key Proposal Elements
- 4 CBSF 2022 RFP Timeline
- 5 A Word from the Districts, Reflections, Q & A

POLL 2



NFWF's Funding Programs - Focus on Chesapeake Bay



Jake Reilly Director, Chesapeake Bay Programs National Fish & Wildlife Foundation (NFWF)



Stephanie Heidbreder Manager, Chesapeake Bay Programs National Fish & Wildlife Foundation (NFWF)



Nicole Thompson Coordinator, Northeastern Region National Fish & Wildlife Foundation (NFWF)

Chesapeake Bay Stewardship Fund (CBSF) Grants Programs

- NFWF's Chesapeake Bay grants programs have evolved and grown over 22 years
- We look to our partners (applicants) to continue to evolve and grow too!
 - Including in proposal quality





Chesapeake Bay Stewardship Fund (CBSF) Primary Goals and Objectives



August 2012 (Revised August 2018) Chesapeake Bay Stewardship Fund | 1

- 1. Improve water quality
 - sediment & nutrient reductions by 2025
- 2. Restore and protect **key species** and their **habitats**
- 3. Foster engaged and diverse citizen and stakeholder action

Chesapeake Bay Business Plan NFWF's blueprint for what it funds & why

Side-by-Side Look at Chesapeake Bay Stewardship Fund (CBSF) Grants				
Grant Program:	Innovative Nutrient & Sediment Reduction Grant	Small Watershed – Implementation Grant	Small Watershed – Planning & Technical Assistance Grant	
Project Focus:	<u>Regional-scale</u> programs, partnerships and <u>collaboratives</u> that will significantly scale up water quality improvements	<u>On-the-ground actions to</u> protect and restore water quality, species, and habitats	Enhance local capacity through assessment, planning, design, and other technical assistance- oriented activities.	
Award Size:	\$500,000 - \$1Million	\$75,000 - \$500,000	Up to \$75,000	

Chesapeake Bay Stewardship Fund (CBSF) Pennsylvania Funding Opportunity - Ag conservation focus

Grant Program:	PA Most Effective Basin (MEB) Grant *			
Lanes: (new this year)	MEB Implementation	MEB Planning & Technical Assistance		
Project Focus:	<u>On-the-ground actions</u> to reduce nitrogen loading through agricultural best management practices in PA's most effective basins	Development of agricultural conservation plans and design of eligible practices for future implementation		
Award Size:	<mark>Up to \$250,000</mark>	Up to \$75,000		
* 2022 RFP is under development expected to be final in mid-Feb				



Engagement from the Keystone State



PA Conservation Districts – Examples of Awards & Roles

SWG-PTA (Planning & Technical Assistance):

- Headwaters Restoration Plan Development, Schuylkill Co CD
- Accelerated Watershed Implementation Plan Development, Bradford Co CD

SWG-I and PA MEB - Implementation Grants:

- Implementing Whole Farm Conservation Practices in Chiques Crk Watershed, Lancaster Co CD
- Developing Ag Plans and Cover Cropping Programs in Middle Crk Watershed, Snyder Co CD
- Reducing Nutrient Loss from Manure in Fishing Creek, Columbia Co CD

Innovative Nutrient & Sediment Reduction (INSR):

- Connecting Urban & Ag Sectors for Accelerated Water Quality Improvements, Blaire Co CD
- Upper Susquehanna Coalition multiple district partners in PA + NY; a single district applicant
- Lancaster Co CD/Conservation Foundation of Lancaster County Clean Water Partners, watershed group and municipal partners

What to expect this year and in the future

• Chesapeake Bay Stewardship Fund (CBSF) program funding levels

• Other NFWF funding programs relevant in PA:

Central Appalachia Habitat Stewardship Program

Delaware River Program (Delaware Watershed Conservation Fund

& Delaware River Restoration Fund)

Chesapeake Wild – upcoming

CD Roles:

- Lead applicant
- Partner
- Convener
- Technical
- Support
- Other

POLL 3



NFWF Program Resources

- NFWF Program Staff
- NFWF Website prior RFPs, proposal tip sheets, recorded applicant / FieldDoc webinars
- Field Liaisons Humans located across the geography



NFWF's Field Liaison Team



Liz Feinberg CalVan Environmental



Kristen Saacke Blunk Headwaters LLC



Katie Ombalski Woods and Waters Consulting, LLC



Dave Hirschman Hirschman Water & Environment, LLC



Kristen Hughes Evans Sustainable Chesapeake

Project Planning

It happens BEFORE the RFP hits the streets Sets the stage for developing a strong project and consequently - a solid proposal.

Helps focus partners and their attention on conservation priorities and the appropriate strategies

Positions the applicant for success.

Heart of the Project Planning Partners + Place + Purpose

WHO are the partners?

- Stakeholders who share your conservation concerns?
- Upstream or downstream residents, landowners or land managers?
- Community members who may not have been previously represented or engaged?

Good projects build on existing partnerships/relationships **AND** actively seek new ones



Heart of the Project Planning Partners + Place + Purpose

WHERE will your project make improvements?

- Where are conservation concerns?
- At what scale is water quality or habitat improvement achievable?
 - watershed or sub-watershed?
 - catchment scale? (i.e., few blocks or acs)
 - a single site?
- Who is concerned, interested, or impacted by conservation issues in this place?



opportunity areas for nutrient and sediment reductions. What makes your project "place" a restoration/conservation opportunity?

Heart of the Project Planning Partners + Place + Purpose

WHAT will your project do?

- What interventions or actions will address conservation concerns?
- Are people and places that have been previously underrepresented now involved in the project? Are their priorities considered?
- Will improvements provide meaningful outcomes to historically marginalized (or underserved) residents and communities?



Pur-pose / 'pərpəs/ the reason for which something is done or created or for which something exists.

Once the RFP hits the streets

Read the RFP - Does it align with the project you have in mind?

- If YES then go forth and develop your proposal.
- If NO perhaps consider building a project or capacity for a future year and NFWF submittal.
- If you're UNSURE Consult with NFWF or a Field Liaison OR attend the applicant webinar to further explore.

ONFWF



SMALL WATERSHED GRANTS

2021 REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Full Proposal Due Date: Thursday, April 22, 2021 by 11:59pm ET

OVERVIEW

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF), in partnership with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the federal-state Chesapeake Bay Program partnership, is soliciting proposals to restore water quality and habitats of the Chesapeake Bay and its tributary rivers and streams.

NFWF is soliciting proposals under the Small Watershed Grants (SWG) program for projects within the Chesapeake Bay watershed that promote community-based efforts to protect and restore the diverse natural resources of the Chesapeake Bay and its inburger juvers and streams. NFWF will award funding through two distinct funding opportunities. SWG Implementation (SWG-I) grants of \$50,000-\$500,000 will be awarded for projects that result in direct, on-the-ground actions to protect and restore water quality, species, and habitatis in the Bay watershed: SWC Planning and Technical Assistance (SWG-PTA) grants up to \$50,000 will be awarded for projects that enhance local capacity to more efficiently and effectively implement future on-the-ground actions through assessment, planning, design, and other technical assistance-oriented activities.

NFWF estimates awarding 58-10 million in grants through the combined SWG program in 2021 contingent on the availability of funding. Major funding comes from the EPA Chesapeake Bay Program Office, with other important contributions by Altria Group, the U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), U.S. Forest Service, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

GEOGRAPHIC FOCUS

All projects must occur wholly within the Chesapeake Bay watershed. Priority consideration will be provided to projects located within priority subwatersheds or habitat units based on the unique opportunities to maximize multiple goals and outcomes for water quality, species, and habitats. Specific priority areas have been identified for each of NFWF's major focus areas for the SWG program. Applicants should consult outcome-specific geographic priorities referenced in this Request for Proposals and NFWF's online Chesapeake Bay Business Plan mapping portal to determine appropriate geographic focus areas for their proposed project activities.



PROGRAM PRIORITIES

Consistent with the Chesapeake Bay Program parmership's 2014 <u>Chesapeake Bay Watershed</u> <u>Agreement</u>. the SWG program supports efforts to achieve water quality improvement, restoration and protection of key Chesapeake Bay species and their habits, and the fostering of an engaged and

POLL 4



Choosing the Right Category Small Watershed Grant Planning & Technical Assistance (SWG-PTA)

Water Quality or Habitat Focused

- Build team/convene stakeholders to address conservation needs
- Enhance staff or program capacity
- Assess existing conditions or develop data to support a public engagement campaign, restoration plan, or BMP design
- Develop a strategy, plan, or approach to prioritize practices, interventions, or actions
- Other conservation activities



Scenario: SWG-PTA



- A watershed group is interested in protecting a local, highquality, cold water trout stream
- The township is also interested in water quality protection, but unsure of the most impactful interventions, conservation practices or restoration activities
- Both the township and the watershed group want a joint action plan to guide future implementation of conservation practices and public engagement

Choosing the Right Category: Small Watershed Grant Implementation (SWG-I)

Water Quality or Habitat Focused

- Plant trees
- Implement or incentivize riparian (forested preferred, but grass buffers & conservation landscapes too)
- Restore wetlands

- Retrofit urban stormwater BMPs
- Implement nature-based GSI
- Install structural/non-structural BMPs on ag, urban or rural lands
- Build barnyard controls / farm conservation practices
- Restore/reconnect floodplains and stream channels











Scenario: SWG-I



- A watershed organization has concept designs for rain gardens to be installed on different sites
- Landowners have agreed to installations.
- Engineer must finalize all designs and project construction needs to be bid out
- A service provider must be lined up to inspect/maintain BMPs
- Desire to fund local watershed stewards to conduct education

PA Most-Effective Basin Grant (MEB)

Ag Conservation practices that reduce N in PA's Most-Effective Basins such as (PARTIAL LIST):

- Tillage management
- Riparian protection including livestock exclusion, forested and grass buffers
- Wetland restoration
- Cover crop and other soil health practices
- Barnyard and roof runoff controls
- Animal waste management storage
- Manure incorporation, injection, and transport
- Prescribed grazing
- Soil and Water Conservation Plans



Scenario: PA MEB



- The Conservation District has a group of farmers who have agreed to inject manure across 1,200 new acres that had previously received manure broadcasted.
- The District is working with a local custom operator to make the practice equipment available.

Innovative Nutrient & Sediment Reduction (INSR) Grant

Projects that have:

- Multiple partners and are an existing, successful or emerging collaborative AND
- An agreed upon path forward to INCREASE water quality benefits for a particular practice or place (a region as opposed to a small, single watershed), AND
- There are NEW ways, or new-to-the multipartner team ways, to ACCELERATE water quality outcomes.



Photo: The Nature Conservancy's Wetlands Acceleration Partnership, A. Jacobs

Which grants program is best fit?

Scenario:

- Water quality and habitat focused project NFWF priority watershed for Eastern brook trout stronghold
- Plan is: (1) replace culvert, (2) enhance 100' wide forest buffer with new trees and removal of invasives, (3) plant live stakes along stream bank
- Collaborate with local colleges, TU, contractor, to finalize designs and implement.
- Local volunteers and students on-board to assist with planting and invasives management



Which grants program is the best fit?

Scenario:

- Two farms in an agriculturally impaired watershed
- Practices ready for implementation include 1) barnyard runoff controls; 2) 35' wide grassy buffer with livestock exclusion and controlled stream crossing.
- Applicant is coordinating with conservation district and NRCS for technical and financial assistance
- Project proposes to fill funding gap
- Applicant has landowner agreements signed or in negotiation
- Project lead will hire a local firm to finalize design plans and install practices



5 Minute Break

Next Up...

Key proposal elements

Tips for strengthening a project proposal

A Reviewer's Perspective



- Lots of proposals to read
- Tough decisions to make
- Need to be able to understand what's on the paper to evaluate and compare
- Proposals that are NOT clear and understandable may raise a RED flag
- "Can the project succeed if the proposal doesn't convey it well?"



NFWF Application – Key Elements

When applicants focus attention on these key elements, it shows and proposals can shine

- Project Description
- & Budget
- Match
- * Project Narrative

Project Description

The first most important place in an application to be **CLEAR & CONCISE**:

Project DESCRIPTION...

It's the front door!

Project Description

Project DESCRIPTION

The first important point in the application where reviewers see what your project will do and what it will accomplish.



When writing a Project DESCRIPTION - Put the <u>3 Practices</u> to work!

Project Description: State what **action** your project will take, **where it will occur** and the **outcome** you will achieve.

The Cow Conservation Alliance will work with farmers to install manure storage structures, implement manure injection and enhance riparian buffers on three family dairy farms in the Warrior Run watershed, Northumberland County. Conservation practices implemented will reduce nutrient runoff pollution and improve water quality consistent with the CAP priorities and restore stream health.



POLL 5

Polley.com/clasnwater378	New Message Carried		
Entire your response Submit response	cleanwater378 [your response] wertyuiop asdfghjkl	Note: you only need to connect once at the start of the session.	PollEv.com/cleanwater378 or Text "cleanwater378" to 22333 to join (only once)
Web voting-Phone or desktop computer	Contractions of the second sec		

Budget – the Numbers

- Include **all** applicable project costs - budget resources for partners with project-specific roles - if your project includes monitoring, a Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP) may be required - budget resources for quality assurance activities
- Budgets should show that a project equitably allocates funds among partners carrying out project activities



- ✓ Personnel
- ✓ Travel
- ✓ Equipment
- \checkmark Materials and **Supplies**
- ✓ Contractors / subgrantees
- ✓ Other Direct Costs
- ✓ Indirect Costs

Budget – the "Budget Narrative"

PERSONNEL • Use Budget Narrative to your advantage Use **Budget** \$19.221.06 Narrative within Budget section to Be clear and concise describe staff roles, subcontractor, partners roles /and An important opportunity to services **Budget Narrative:** succinctly describe partner roles 1. Personnel Personnel -An important opportunity to 2. Travel reflect authentic partnerships Domestic Alrfare - Per Flight International Airfare - Per Flight Train - Per Ticket

Match

Important to every proposal whether required or not!

Match: the portion of total project costs provided by the applicant and its partners in the form of in-kind donations or cash expended during the project period

Sources:

- Cash contributions
- In-kind services volunteer hours, pro-bono support, staff time not covered in project budget
- Pledged, secured, or applied for



Match

Match Matters!

- <u>Cash</u> match can boost proposal competitiveness
- <u>In-kind</u> match can boost competitiveness
- Match represents partner buy-in
- Letters of Support validate match and financial commitments



Match - Scenario

You're proposing a project to install riparian forest buffer along 800' of stream. A local community college is lining up internships for its landscape-professionals training program. Interns are available to provide 300 hours of service to inspect, maintain, and replant the project site over two growing seasons.

How can this be reflected in a proposal to boost its competitiveness?

- Select "In-Kind Matching Contribution Pledged"
- Identify the value of contribution (and how it was calculated)
 300H x \$28.54/hr (ex. Rate for volunteer) = \$8,562
- List college as the Source of Match
- Describe the service pledged, e.g., what the interns will do and when
- Include a Letter of Support from the college showing its contribution
- Use the Project Narrative to describe how the project leverages partner support

POLL 6



Project Narrative - Use it to your advantage!

When drafting the Project Narrative...

- ✓ Use NFWF's Narrative Template
- Align proposal language with RFP terminology

A compelling Project Narrative ...

- Project goal and objectives
- Project context
- Co-benefits
- Work plan

Project Objectives

2nd

A second most important place in an application to be CLEAR and CONCISE:

Project OBJECTIVES

Project Objectives: specific steps to be taken to accomplish the project goal and achieve project outcomes

Putting those <u>3 Practices</u> to work when writing **Project OBJECTIVES**

Objectives: A single, concrete sentence.

Stating:

- Specific actions to be taken,
- By whom, and
- To achieve what results

3 Writing Practices for drafting proposals:

1- simple & precise declarative sentences

2- specific & concrete language

Objective 1: The SWCD will update existing conservation plans with three dairy farmers and help them enroll in NRCS programs to implement enhanced nutrient management practices that address water resource concerns.

Objective 2: The riparian buffer will be restored and expanded by the project team to improve filtering function and increase width.

Project Context

3- consistent language

Why is this particular geography important?

- Is it a local or regional priority?
- Is there an opportunity to reduce nutrient/sediment loading and improve water quality?
- Is it a priority catchment or site based on a recent assessment or action plan?
- Are there impaired streams and motivated farmers/landowners?

Who is involved or concerned?

- Is a local watershed group or land trust interested or concerned?
- Are local farmers, residents or municipalities engaged or interested?

How are partners/stakeholders already involved?

- Are watershed stewards/local environmental councils leading outreach/education
- Have BMP designs/concepts been reviewed or vetted by community members?

What past or ongoing activities support this project?

- Has a watershed assessment or data gathering occurred?
- Is stakeholder communication or collaboration ongoing?
- Has community input been sought through a design charrette/watershed summit?



Project Co-Benefits *

...when your water quality or habitat improvement project results in **additional outcomes** that meet broader CBSF priorities

- Diversifies songbird population
- > Bolsters local amphibian populations
- Increases habitat for freshwater mussels
- Diminishes heat islands in city hot spots
- Protects drinking water supplies
- > Engages young people in restoration
- Builds workforce skills and jobs
- Sequesters carbon
- Reduces localized flooding



Project: Co-Benefits

- Co-benefits should ACCOMPANY not overshadow PRIMARY CONSERVATION OUTCOMES
- Co-benefits can boost project cost effectiveness and proposal competitiveness
- NFWF is interested in multiple benefits!
 BUT project co-benefits should be real & meaningful
- Don't assume reviewers know the value of the project's co-benefits tell them!



POLL 7



Work Plan *	Objective 1: Update farm conservation plans to enroll dairy farmers in NRCS programs and implement enhanced nutrient management practices			
Identifies how partners wi	Task / Activity	Who	Timeframe	Deliverable
accomplish project objectives.	1.1 Schedule on-site meeting with farmer	SWCD	By End of 2021	Project launch
For each objective identify:	1.2 Update conservation plan	SWCD with producer	January 2022	Updated conservation plan
 ✓ Major tasks ✓ Who performs tasks ✓ Task timeframe 	1.3 Complete enrollment process for NRCS & State Cost share for manure injection & storage	Concentration Alian A Tech	Winter 2022	Contracts for cost share
✓ Deliverables	1.4 Field day, evaluation of manure injection	Cow Conservation Alliance & partners	Fall J22	Educational and outeach materials
Tip: Major tasks should	1.5 Manure storage construction	Contractor, Producer	Spring 2023	Completed manure storage shed
align with activities described in Budget	1.6 Edge of field monitoring	NRCS and SWCD	Spring 2023	Post implementation
Narrative	* PA MEB proposals require a Work Plan		evaluation	

Before Tapping Submit...

Carefully Review the RFP and remember to Upload Proposal Attachments

Note: RFP attachment requirements can vary

Attachments such as:

- □ Project Narrative * always required for all RFPs
- □ FieldDoc documentation / load reduction calculations always required
- □ Letters of Support * required for some; encouraged for all proposals
- Site photos optional; very helpful to reviewers
- □ Key design documents optional; can strengthen a proposal
- Others, such as
 - -- Operations & Maintenance (O&M) Plan *
 - -- Landowner Agreements *
 - -- stream restoration supplement if applicable

* Required for PA MEB applications



A word from the Districts



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Reflections - What resonates with YOU?

- ~ Please Raise Hand & Unmute ~
- o Did today's workshop spark any ideas for new projects or partners?
- o What did you hear today that is new or reinforces something you already knew?

- Q&A in a few minutes -

Questions & Answers



Raise Hand & Unmute or Put Questions in Zoom Q&A box

Contact Information

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Thank YOU for joining us!

Special thanks to:

Holly Miller & Molly Burns, PA Association of Conservation Districts, Inc.

Beth Futrick, Blair County Conservation District

Matt Kofroth, Lancaster County Conservation District

We'd appreciate feedback! Please take our brief survey (link in Chat)

Photographs sourced from NFWF CBSF team unless otherwise noted





PENNSYLVANIA ASSOCIATION OF CONSERVATION DISTRICTS, INC.