

Request for Proposals: Independent Evaluation of the Chesapeake Bay Stewardship Fund's
Innovative Nutrient and Sediment Reduction Program

Responses to Questions on the Solicitation

6/5/24

Applicant Question #1: The evaluation could take very different forms depending on the expected scale of the work. Do you have a range for the budget?

A: We cannot share information about the budget for this evaluation. The proposed cost should be adequate for the level of effort necessary for providing robust findings. The final scope and budget for the evaluation will be negotiated between NFWF and the selected contractor.

Applicant Question #2: To what extent did grantees have evaluation plans and/or implement evaluations of their programs? If they did evaluate their grants, would the independent evaluator have access to those evaluation reports?

A: NFWF has not required applicable grantees to develop evaluation plans or implement evaluations of their programs. However, a selected number of grantees have developed these evaluation plans and implemented evaluations at their own direction. In some cases, those evaluation plans and associated evaluation reports have been voluntarily submitted to NFWF by grantees as part of their annual and final programmatic reporting. In those cases, NFWF will provide copies of any such evaluation plans or reports to the evaluator(s). Evaluator access to any existing grantees evaluation plans or reports not otherwise submitted to NFWF will be determined on a case-by-case basis at the sole discretion of the grantee.

Applicant Question #3: Are each of the collaboratives undergoing individual evaluation already? Or is this RFP intended to measure the collaboratives' effectiveness in aggregate?

A: Funded collaboratives have variously pursued their own independent evaluations, either through and with support from NFWF grant funding or through their own discretion and funding. This evaluation is not intended to measure the effectiveness of each individual collaborative. Instead, the intent to measure the aggregate impact of these collaboratives in achieving the program's three primary objectives.¹ However, extant data and information on the effectiveness of individual collaboratives (e.g., through separate, grantee-led independent evaluations) may be available to supplement, inform, and provide case studies in the context of the broader goal of this evaluation.

Applicant Question #4: Is the expectation that the evaluation is based on a sampling of grantees or 100% inclusion of all 50 collaboratives and relevant partners?

A: Offerors should propose a plan to meet the goals of the evaluation and provide sufficient substantive answers to the primary evaluation question based on the scope and methods they deem most appropriate. Sampling- and census-based approaches are considered viable, with the expectation that sampling-based methods provide for more in-depth analysis of the sampled population.

Applicant Question #5: Is the independent evaluation limited to a desktop assessment, or are site visits anticipated?

A: Offerors should propose a plan to meet the goals of the evaluation and provide sufficient substantive answers to the primary evaluation question based on the scope and methods they deem most appropriate, which may include site visits. NFWF anticipates that a significant portion of the potentially necessary information may be gathered by desktop methods, including document review, telephone and/or video-based interviews, and surveys.

Applicant Question #6: Given the short time frame and possible budget limits for the evaluation, is there flexibility to limit the scope of the evaluation to be aligned with these?

A: Offerors should propose a plan to meet the goals of the evaluation and provide sufficient substantive answers to the primary evaluation question based on the scope and methods they deem most appropriate, the targeted timeframe for the evaluation, and their view of a cost-effective budget.

Applicant Question #7: We are assuming that, in addition to the organizations that are leading the collaboratives and have received grants directly, we will need to collect data from non-grantee partners who are participating in the collaboratives. Approximately how many non-grantee partner organizations are there?

A: NFWF roughly estimates 3-5 key partner organizations/entities in addition to the grantee organization for each collaborative and some degree of overlap between organizations participating in multiple collaboratives, translating to roughly 150-200 total organizations considered as collaborative leads or key partners for potential engagement and investigation. See **Applicant Question #4** for additional information on expectations regarding sampling- versus census-based approaches to engaging affected collaboratives and partner organizations.

Applicant Question #8: How much can we rely on grantees and/or NFWF to provide us with the needed data on the outcomes achieved by grantees and non-grantees?

- **What sorts of reports are grantees required to submit to NFWF?**
- **Do grantee reports contain up-to-date information on BMP implementation?**
- **Do grantee reports include modeled estimates of load reductions and/or monitoring data? How consistently have they used the FieldDoc platform, and would the evaluators have access to FieldDoc data?**
- **To what extent has targeted field-based monitoring been used to validate modeled estimates?**

A: Grantees are required to provide programmatic reports annually during the period of performance and a final report prior to grant closure. All applicable grantees have been further required to separately track and report ongoing BMP implementation progress and associated modeled load reductions at least once annually using the FieldDoc platform, and final FieldDoc reports of completed BMP implementation are required alongside final programmatic reporting and will be provided as part of the evaluator's document discovery. NFWF can further provide the

evaluators with direct access to the FieldDoc platform and associated data. Beyond BMP tracking via FieldDoc and associated load reduction modeling, field-based monitoring has only been used sparsely on a case-by-case basis to validate modeled results.

Applicant Question #9: If modeled load reduction estimates are not already available, will the evaluators be expected to run those estimates themselves. How would the input data for those models be obtained?

A: NFWF will provide modeled load reduction estimates for all applicable grant projects. See **Applicant Question #8**.

Q: Evaluation Question #3 asks for a comparison of outcomes before and after the program redesign in 2018. Will the evaluators be expected to conduct primary research on the pre-2018 projects, or has the necessary information already been collected? If new research is required, approximately how many grants and non-grantee partners would need to be reviewed?

A: In comparing outcomes before and after program redesign, NFWF intends for evaluators to first utilize findings from [the 2017 INSR program evaluation](#) to understand BMP implementation and water quality outcomes from the INSR program prior to 2018. Additional investigations and analyses may be included to further elucidate the requested comparison (e.g., comparing INSR program progress post-2018 to broader [progress under the Chesapeake Bay TMDL](#), use of the [Chesapeake Assessment Scenario Tool](#)), but are not required.

Q: Is Evaluation Question #3 intended to be a quantitative analysis that provides direct comparison to the data and metrics collected in 2017 evaluation?

- **If so, are all grantees required to collect the same data and report progress on program outcomes the same way to answer Evaluation Question #3? Is all data reported to NFWF in the same format by grantees /collaboratives on a regular basis?**
- **If not, would a more qualitative evaluation approach be acceptable to answer Evaluation Question #3?**

A: See **Applicant Questions #8 and #9**. NFWF considers both quantitative and qualitative evaluation approaches as highly relevant and valuable in answering Evaluation Question #3.