

2026-2027 Virginia Watershed Educational Programs Project

Request for Applications

Source of Funding: Virginia General Fund

Issued By:

Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation
Division of Soil and Water Conservation
600 E. Main Street, 24th Floor
Richmond, VA 23219
RFA# VA_WTR_Educ_001

RFA and GRANT PROJECT AWARDS TIMELINE

March 5, 2026:	Deadline for application submission
June 1, 2026:	Anticipated notification of award
July 1, 2026:	Beginning of grant project funding
December 15, 2026:	Submission of mid year report
May 31, 2027:	Request for final funding and submission of final report

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A. PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND

Through this Request for Applications, the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) seeks qualified applicants to provide exemplary “meaningful watershed educational experiences” (MWEE) within Virginia’s Chesapeake Bay watershed. Applications received in response to this request will be considered for funding for project work beginning July 1, 2026. These funds are intended to be utilized during the 2026-2027 school year. The anticipated state funding available is \$250,000. There is no minimum funding request required. The maximum request allowed is \$45,000.

As one of the signatories to the Chesapeake Bay 2014 Agreement (as amended), Virginia is committed to increasing “students’ age-appropriate understanding of the watershed through participation in teacher-supported, meaningful watershed educational experiences and rigorous, inquiry-based instruction, with a target of at least one meaningful watershed educational experience in elementary, middle and high school depending on available resources.”

MWEEs are learner-centered experiences that focus on investigations into local environmental issues and lead to informed action and civic engagement. MWEEs provide opportunities for students to apply discipline practices and conceptual understanding of grade level standards to relevant community issues as they complete either group or individually designed action projects. *MWEEs are not a one-day learning experience; they are robust multi-day learning experiences that include field investigations aligned to content and action projects that serve as a springboard for developing environmentally literate graduates.* Additional, detailed information about MWEEs is available at https://www.chesapeakebay.net/documents/Revised_MWEE_definition_-FINAL.pdf.

Successful applications will include programs that emphasize the use of field experiences, action projects, and other watershed educational services that contribute in measurable ways toward meeting Virginia’s goal to provide all students with this experience. Applications should demonstrate the need for resources to establish or support the successful implementation of MWEEs aligned to the Virginia Standards of Learning. Schools or school districts that do not currently have MWEEs being implemented or that lack dedicated personnel to develop and provide MWEEs are strongly encouraged to apply. Demographic information for the school or school district such as the number of students that receive free or reduced lunch; whether the school is designated as a “Title 1” school; whether the school or school districts serves students of color or other underrepresented populations; and other related information may also demonstrate the need for resources.

B. ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

Eligible applicants include, but are not limited to, school divisions, nonprofit organizations, higher education institutions, state agencies, and soil and water conservation districts. Partnerships between school divisions or between organizations (e.g. a non-profit and a school division) are permitted.

Eligible applicants must have a demonstrated ability to:

1. Provide educational programs, services, and outreach to students, teachers, or administrators; resumes are not required, but may provide evidence of ability.
2. Assign a Program Manager who will:
 - a. Direct and oversee the MWEEs provided through this contract;
 - b. Provide all required programmatic and financial reporting to DCR; and
3. Ensure adequate numbers of trained staff are available to provide the MWEEs.

C. ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES

1. MWEE curricula and Training:

- a. Develop all classroom and outdoor program curricula for proposed MWEE activity.

The curricula must align to the Virginia Standards of Learning related to the environment and, if applicable, the Chesapeake Bay Watershed, and should reflect best practices in MWEE educational pedagogy.

- b. Ensure that all educators (administrators and teachers) are adequately trained in the use of the

curricula and in implementing field experiences prior to beginning the activity.

- c. Provide both face-to-face and virtual support to educators throughout the implementation of the curricula and MWEE in their classes.

2. Provide primarily face to face components of the proposed MWEE program to an identified

school division:

- a. The program must meet the definition of and demonstrate all essential elements of a MWEE;
 - various field activities, action projects, and related educational services must be included.
- b. This program should include content aligned to grade level standards and field experiences that are conducted either on school or community sites.
- c. There should be collaboration between students, teachers, and administrators in developing and implementing action projects.

3. Program outreach and communication:

- Present MWEE program curricula and outcomes at one or more Virginia state-sponsored professional development or other collaborative programs.

4. Other Watershed Educational Services that include educational efforts that contribute to

- building capacity across Virginia for MWEEs and should include:
 - a. Training for community-based education partners related to teaching watershed concepts and trainings on being an education-service provider who can plan and conduct high quality MWEE field experiences for schools.
 - b. Programs and mentoring strategies that enable highly experienced classroom teachers to mentor new teachers and to work with local community partners.

D. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS

The application for the 2026-2027 Virginia Watershed Educational Programs project should include required components as described in Section E. All required components must be submitted in order for the application to be considered for review.

All application components **must be in an electronic** format. Microsoft Word is the preferred format. If a grant award is offered and the proposal is not in "Word", a revised format in Word will be required.

In order to be considered for selection for this 2026-2027 Virginia Watershed Educational Programs Project, applicants are required to submit a completed 2026-2027 Virginia Watershed Educational Programs Project Application to the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation **by end of day March 5, 2026**. Incomplete applications and those that are not submitted as specified will be disqualified. Email application packages to:

Lori.Schoenwiesner@DCR.Virginia.gov.

E. APPLICATION INFORMATION GUIDELINES AND TEMPLATE

Below is an outline that serves as the proposal narrative guidelines. Proposals submitted that do not follow the exact outline will still be considered but must address the same content as below.

1. Applicant Information

- a. Name of Organization (Once awarded, this identity cannot change)
- b. Mailing Address (same address that will be used on W9)
- c. City, State, Zip
- d. Federal ID # or DUNS #
- e. Grant Manager
 - a. E-mail
 - b. Phone Number
- f. Project Manager
 - a. E-mail
 - b. Phone Number

- g. Type of Organization: school districts, nonprofit organizations, higher education institutions, and soil and water conservation districts, etc.
- h. Partner school division or organization, if applicable

2. Project Information

The Project Information section needs to provide a detailed explanation of the proposed activities for the grant project. This section will become the grant Scope of Work. The Project information section should include the following:

- a. Organization or situation narrative - Provide a brief narrative of organizational history as it relates to the importance and ability to complete the proposed project. And/or provide a brief narrative of the need or situation requiring the proposed project.
- b. Purpose – Provide a brief summary of the intent of the project. Include the Virginia Standards of Learning that will be addressed through the completion of the project.
- c. Methodology (scope of work) – Describe the processes to accomplish the goals and deliverables of the work. Activities from section C (Eligible Activities) should be listed as deliverables with processes described for each.
- d. Include a description of the partner school division(s); grade levels addressed; anticipated number of participants (students, teachers, educators) and demographic information such as the number of students that receive free or reduced lunch; whether the school is designated as a “Title 1” school; or whether the school or school districts serve underrepresented populations. **If applicable, letters of support must be provided from the partner school division(s).** This is proof that the school or districts intended to collaborate are aware and in support of this project.
- e. Resumes and curriculum vitae of staff that will be working on the MWEE as well as documentation of any past or ongoing funding agreements administered by the applicant are not required but can strengthen the application.

3. Budget Detail

There is no minimum funding request required for this grant round; the maximum request allowed is \$45,000. Budget detail should be categorized and detailed. Indirect expenses are not reimbursable. Specific values should be given rather than estimates.

Budget categories are:

- a. Personnel;
- b. Fringe;
- c. Travel;
- c. Supplies;
- d. Equipment;
- e. Contractual; and
- f. Other direct expenses.

F. REIMBURSABLE EXPENSES AND REPORTING REQUIREMENTS:

The following are examples of expenses that would typically be reimbursed by this grant:

1. Providing all program activity and instructional personnel, equipment, facilities,
materials, supplies, transportation, and incidentals, etc.
2. Maintaining all necessary equipment and deploying all supplies needed to
the MWEE
participants.
3. Identifying and securing access to all MWEE activity and instruction sites.
4. Scheduling all MWEE activities and instruction.
5. Ensuring adequate safety and security of all MWEE participants.

Expense reimbursements will be based upon successful progress reported. A midyear progress report is due by December 15, 2026 and should include a summary of project progress to that date and an updated budget with narrative. A complete, final program report, due by May 31, 2027 should summarize all the program activities and include, at a minimum:

1. The names of the participating schools, classes, or divisions;
2. number of participants (students, teachers, administrators);
3. grade levels addressed;
4. a brief description of accomplished activities; and
5. an updated budget with narrative.

6. pictures are optional but appreciated as part of your report and may be used to feature your organization and their accomplishments on the DCR website. Please use the DCR permission for photo application for individuals whose faces are identifiable in shared images. We cannot use images that include faces unless the DCR specific photo permission form has been signed.

G. DCR CONTACTS & REFERENCES

General questions regarding this request for applications and the grant awarding process can be directed to EnvironmentalEducation@dcr.virginia.gov.

H. EVALUATION AND AWARD CRITERIA

Project applications will be evaluated based on the criteria listed below. A team of DCR staff and subject matter experts will evaluate and rank applications. Final decisions for project selection are the discretion of the DCR Director.

The application will not be considered unless the applicant meets all eligibility requirements and has submitted a complete application.

1. The proposed project meets the description of a meaningful watershed educational experience as defined in section A.
2. The funding request effectively maximizes the impact by serving a significant number of students, staff, and/or administrators.
3. The proposed project addresses specific VA standards of learning, using strong strategies and adaptations needed by participants.
4. The applicant indicates a need for funding. Demographic information was provided.
5. The proposed project has a clearly defined purpose and methodology that accurately addresses the project goals.
6. Information was given showing efforts towards project sustainability beyond the time of funding.